The Dissertation Committee for Young-Eun Kim Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Students' Understandings of Educational Achievement in a High-Stakes Testing Environment: Stories from Korean Secondary Schools

Committee:

Noah De Lissovoy, Supervisor

Christopher Brown

Keffrelyn Brown

Sherry Field

Jennifer Holme

Students' Understandings of Educational Achievement in a High-Stakes Testing Environment: Stories from Korean Secondary Schools

by

Young-Eun Kim, B.A;M.A.E.d.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2013

Dedication

To my loved ones who have long waited for this moment: my supportive husband, Tak-Joon Jung, lovely girls Jennie Harry Jung and Jessie Harrin Jung, and another constant supporter Young-Soo Jung who is my father-in-law.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the professors at UT and in Arkansas, who were there for my final defense. I cannot forget all your support in my every situation as well as my classes. Your support and interest meant so much to me, especially when I struggled to find my space in an academic life in a foreign country. Dr. Christopher Brown helped me position myself as a qualitative researcher in education. Dr. Keffrelyn Brown provided a critical moment for me to reflect on cultural foundations of schooling. Dr. Jennifer Holme was willing to say yes to be on the committee and encouraged me to keep on thinking about opportunity gaps in education. I learned from Dr. Sherry Field that the support from a warm heart meant even more to a student who struggled to survive. Dr. Noah De Lissovoy, I cannot imagine how I could have kept on this long journey without you. Whenever I needed your help, you always stood by me as a friend and advisor with academic inspirations and warm encouragement. I am very proud of the opportunity to be your student and having all of you on my committee. All your support will act as my energy and nutrition for another long journey I am about to begin. I am very glad and honored to have a chance to say thank you all. Thank you so deeply from my heart.

Students' Understandings of Educational Achievement in a High-Stakes Testing Environment: Stories from Korean Secondary Schools

Young-Eun Kim, Ph.D.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

Supervisor: Noah De Lissovoy

The purpose of this study is to explore high school students' understandings of achievement and opportunity through their lived experiences which are constructed under a high-stakes testing environment in Korea. This study undertakes a critical analysis of high-stakes testing and its intersectional effects in terms of structure and culture, attending to students' everyday experiences in testing practices as these are embedded in certain discourses. Recent scholarship reveals that high-stakes testing reinforces a correspondence between socioeconomic status and educational attainment under the neoliberal educational policies of school choice, privatization, and high-stakes testing. In the analysis of educational policies such as the accountability movement, some studies contend that the political and economic discourses underpinning high-stakes testing are effectively hidden behind educational practices ostensibly aimed at raising standards. To date, however, there has been little attention to how students internalize the logic of neoliberal competition and how they experience educational achievement and opportunity structure within a high-stakes testing environment. Drawing on in-depth interviews of high school students from varying economic and academic backgrounds, this study found that students' experiences of the high-stakes testing environment are influenced by their social class and achievement levels. High-stakes testing does not contribute to reducing

achievement gaps between classes but rather reinforces educational alienation as well as opportunity gaps. Furthermore, high-stakes testing, as a cultural practice which affects students' daily lives and their experience of curriculum and instruction, contributes to the ideological construction of students' understandings of achievement and opportunity structure. While students experience structural constraints in achievement, they believe in testing as being a fair and equal opportunity. Concealing students' struggles within structural barriers as well as their contradictory experiences in relation to ideologies of achievement and success, high-stakes testing becomes the medium through which students' social desires are reproduced. An intersectional analysis in terms of culture and structure of students' experiences in relation to high-stakes testing can help us to understand how the achievement ideology responds to students' aspirations and also how those aspirations help this ideology persist. This study urges educational policies to focus on opportunity gaps and to look at contradictions and struggles that students experience in high-stakes testing.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction

BACKGROUND

Culturally, Koreans emphasize the importance of attaining high levels of education, and they see such attainment as being necessary to foster national competitiveness for economic development and prosperity as well as to promote individual social mobility. Based on this notion, which is predominant across the country, people generally view educational opportunity as being given equally to all, and any type of failure as the result of individual incompetence or lack of effort. For me, the most common saying from teachers was "If you want to live better, then study harder than others." This sentiment, in addition to the strong Confucian belief that education is a human duty, shapes Korea's unusual educational passions.

My personal experiences in this system contradict this idea. I grew up with parents who worked hard with a high-school and 2-year additional education, but stayed in the working class and lived in poverty. At first, I blamed my parents and regarded them as incompetent. But, from my experiences with close friends who had poor academic achievement in spite of continuous efforts, and my 'abilities' to benefit from school knowledge focusing on math, English, and memorization, I vaguely realized that efforts and abilities could not account entirely for educational opportunity.

My only purpose in learning was to get high scores on the last test to get into a university. As such, I lost my own curiosity and academic interests. In each class, I could not construct meanings except for preparing for tests, nor could I connect this learning to my life. For example, math was about obtaining test skills without recognizing mathematics in life and social studies was about rote-memorizing without reflecting on

life issues in relation to society, history, and politics. Living and schooling were separate, and school knowledge was fragmented and transient. These experiences led to my concern with how high-stakes testing excludes students from learning.

During my experiences as a teacher in middle schools, students' backgrounds appeared to explain their achievement, and access to higher achievement was permitted only to the higher-income students due to the pervasive privatization of education and private tutoring. I realized something wrong with this system, which dominates the entire schooling including curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessments, and reinforces and reproduces educational inequalities. I witnessed much more students from low-income groups who did not succeed in the high-stakes system despite great efforts. Moreover, these students were seen as failures and their educational needs became invisible in high-stakes testing. Even more problematic is that the students themselves thought they would fail in schooling. High-stakes tests organize the educational system in a way that alters students' lives and make a hierarchy according to scores (W.-G. Jeong, 2011). I started to regard high-stakes tests as a barrier to learning as well as educational equality. Further, I felt contradictions in my earlier educational commonsense that efforts make abilities and then abilities make social mobility possible in a system in which, many believe, tests are a symbol of educational equality.

Furthermore, I became interested in why students who I used to teach and their parents still advocate for this high-stakes system in spite of their own struggles and disadvantages. My study focuses on educational discourses inherent in high-stakes testing practices. These play a role in both producing certain kind of beliefs and diluting certain kind of effects. I feel necessary to question what is behind the seeming achievement based on particular education policy: how does the system work and how do students experience educational achievement in this educational system?

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Academic achievement in Korea is a paradox in that their performance level, for instance, is ranked as one of the highest in reading, science, and math assessments in PISA (OECD Program for International Student Assessment, PISA 2009 Report, retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/pisa/46643496.pdf) and 80 percent of all students go to college or university, whereas their academic interest is the lowest compared to other countries (W.-G. Jeong, 2011, p. 15). In addition, many students choose to study abroad: in 2011 about 10,859 students from elementary through high schools in Seoul went to study abroad with emigration or study purposes (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, retrieved from http://www.statistics.sen.go.kr). President Obama's frequent comments on Korea's educational success and passion seem ironic to most Koreans in some sense (Joo, 2010, October 13). According to Obama, Korea is among the exemplary countries in education. In spite of his praises the achievement in Korea, he does not recognize students' struggles in a situation where schooling means testing.

In the U.S. too, excellence and achievement under high-stakes testing is being emphasized (Au, 2011; Lipman, 2004; Nichols & Berliner, 2007). The Bush administration mandated statewide high-stakes testing through the No Child Left Behind act in 2002 on the basis of their 'miracle' experiences of raising achievement in Texas (Hursh, 2009). Based on educational efficiency and excellence, this act ensured that all children would reach the proficiency level and the achievement gap between groups would close. However, the high-stakes which are attached to the standardized tests threaten or reward students, teachers, administrators, and even school communities in the name of accountability. The stakes are so high that the test scores determine students' life-altering consequences such as graduation, retention, and promotion. Nichols and Berliner

(2007) answered why high-stakes testing has been easily accepted among people: “the prominence of business and accountability in our daily life,” the belief that the educated determines the future economy, the privileged people’ demand for a separating system by race and class, and a common culture familiar with competition (pp.18-25). High-stakes testing impacts are not understood without consideration on power relations which are woven by class, race, and gender, as well as cultural processes which affect students’ ideological and hegemonic constructions on achievement. Otherwise, test scores misrepresent students’ educational success. High-stakes testing becomes another example of Campbell’s law that the excessive reliance on the singular quantitative indicator corrupts the process and the result (Nichols & Berliner, 2007).

The concrete effects of high-stakes testing emerge in teaching and learning practices. Students are likely to get the narrowed curriculum scripted with specific subject matters and specific skills (Alexander & Riconscente, 2005; Jones, 2001). Test preparation and ‘teaching to the test’ is prevalent particularly among those who are low achievers in the classroom (Haney, 2000). In contrast, schools and classrooms having high achievers focus on more advanced learning and curriculum. Teaching is aligned with testing, and teachers have strong pressure from the state to raise scores, losing their own agency and being deskilled (Abrams, Pedulla, & Madaus, 2003; Haney, 2000). Furthermore, test results exercise a much bigger consequence on minority groups than white students (Madaus & Clarke, 2001; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001). Minority students often suffer from the notion of cultural deficiency and limited access to economic resources as well as underachievement. Thus they are disproportionately excluded from schools with high drop-out rates and high retention rates. High-stakes testing reflects the current unequal opportunity structure and simultaneously reinforces it. Academic achievement does not get better (Amrein & Berliner, 2002), the achievement gap does not

decline (Horn, 2003) and further the polarization of education gets larger. Therefore, high-stakes testing is likely to contribute to correspondences between socioeconomic status and educational attainment (Anyon, 2011; Au, 2009).

Korea also accepts the formula that raising academic achievement and standards means improving the quality of education. The recently mandated implementation of the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) and its evaluation of schools and teachers according to the test result instigate each school and classroom to prepare for the test. The purpose of the NAEA was originally to reduce the achievement gap by region and by school. However, it appears to confirm the hierarchy between schools, and to render achievement into test scores. In addition to the stigma on specific schools, the centralization and controls on schools and teachers increase (I.-H. Kim, 2010).

Given that the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) determines students' college admissions, this test and relevant tests are considered the most high-stakes among Koreans. It affects classrooms from elementary to high school and private tutoring markets (Jang, 2011). Originally, this test was intended to foster higher mental functioning instead of rote-memorization, to raise students' academic achievement, and to improve the quality of secondary education through interdisciplinary problem solving (Korean Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, retrieved from http://www.suneung.re.kr). However, recent studies have shown that it has not realized educational purposes specified in curriculum standards (W.-G. Jeong, 2011), as well, it has produced a huge educational gap between groups and regions (Baek & Kim, 2007; Byung-Chul, 2008).

Further, the importance of this high-stakes test in determining students' access to higher education imposes an excessive economic burden on households. It is estimated that Korean families spent about 21.6 billion dollars in 2009 on private tutoring (The

2009 Census, Statistics Korea, retrieved from http://www.kostat.go.kr). More specifically, educational expenditure is being polarized by income. In 2010, the top 20 percent of households, in terms of income, spent an average ₩543,000 ($ 493, $1=₩1,100) a month on tutoring, whereas the lower 20 percent spent the average ₩86,000 ($78). The former group's yearly increase rate is much larger than the latter's. In addition to private tutoring, the regular educational expenditures for schooling prove the disparity between the two groups. The top 20 percent spent monthly ₩194,000 ($176) while the lower 20 percent counterparts spent ₩39,000 ($35) (E.-J. Gwon, 2012, February 20). This means that the former is more likely to send their kids to private schools for schooling. Private expenses on education strongly affect the CSAT test scores and the entrance rate to top-tier universities (Baek & Kim, 2007; Byung-Chul, 2008; M. H. Shin, 2010). University hierarchy tends to explain graduates' incomes commensurate with rankings and the CAST scores are also associated with income after graduation (Song, 2011, October 15).

As the economic structure is reproduced through educational hierarchy, the psychological constriction for upward social mobility emerges. According to the 2011 social survey by the Statistics Korea, 42.9 percent thought their children have the upward possibility while 41.7 percent chose the answer that the possibility is little. This is contrastive to the 2003 survey result that 45.5 percent asserted the big possibility and 19.8 percent for little. This was the first time the negative prevails over the positive (Y.-H. Kim, 2011, December 16). In this regard, high-stakes testing is deeply involved in opportunity structure in education. However, the differentiated distribution through high-stakes testing is justified among those believing that this ensures equal opportunity for different socioeconomic and political backgrounds (W.-G. Jeong, 2011). While the highest stakes are attached to the CSAT, it is taken for granted and unquestioned among Koreans (S.-H. Park, 2010).

In the meantime, annually, a few high school seniors commit suicide right before the test date. The first cause (28.2%) of the mortality among teenagers in Korea is 'suicide.' According to the 2010 Survey by Statistics Korea, the reasons for thinking about suicide were 'academic attainment and college entrance' (53.4%), 'family trouble' (12.6%), 'loneliness' (11.2%), and 'poverty' (10.5%) (Ryu, 2011, November 12). It seems urgent to explore how students experience the educational world under high-stakes since education policy keeps silent concerning students' experiences and their meaning making (Jang, 2011).

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Education policies primarily rely on the nationwide external high-stakes testing which focuses on efficiency, objectivity, and fairness, and neglect the educational essences (S.-H. Park, 2010). High-stakes testing is grounded in specific beliefs such as excellence in education and procedural fairness. Whether it intends to or not, furthermore, hi-stakes testing produces educational discourse with regard to educational achievement, opportunity, inequality, and political ideologies. It also justifies the distribution based on meritocratic principle (Chang, 2011). For the purpose of evaluating students' ability, it places the individual in a vacuum removing the context where ability is constructed. Moreover, high-stakes testing and its policy is concerned with neoliberal competitions and choices among individuals and schools, producing the low educability of public education (C.-G. Kim, 2009). Apple (1996) urges us to be conscious of 'the ideological umbrella' covering educational democratization with standards and accountability.

Lipman (2004) illuminates two aspects of neoliberal education policy: "Two complementary, though seemingly contradictory aspects of these frameworks; one is decentralized management and opening up of schooling to the market; the other is strong

state regulation through centralized regimes of testing, monitoring, and accountability" (p. 9). Thus, it is essential to pay attention to education policy and its practices in order to look at how these affect students and teachers' everyday life. Policies producing educational discourses frame the meaning system with cultural hegemonic processes (Apple, 2004; Lipman, 2004). In the study by Lipman (2004) of the Chicago urban school policies, using both the macro level of policies and economic globalization and the micro level of students and teachers' experiences, she showed how education policies work with cultural politics. Cultural analysis reveals another story behind the 'good sense' that policies and practices intend to deliver.

High-stakes testing requires the analysis of structural inequality using class and economic relations to examine how it contributes to the overall economic reproduction. Furthermore, high-stakes testing needs extended analysis in the domain of the meaning system. Particular discourse and cultural belief adheres to high-stakes testing as a cultural practice. 'Class culture theory' contributes to a more complex interpretation, highlighting the role of culture to explain schooling experiences (Foley, 2010). First, the class relation and exploitation does not fully analyze other social formations like racial and gender practices (McCarthy, 1988). Second, schooling experiences need micro level accounts of culture (re)production and resistance (Giroux, 2001). The emphasis on culture compromises the dualism of structure and superstructure, as well as economic determinism. Particularly, Gramsci (1971) focuses on the level of ideology and culture in forming commonsensical hegemony in the "war of position." This is not to say that critical analysis abandons the role of structure but to say that culture is considered relatively autonomous, and class and culture are intersectional.

Cultural politics in education works in relation to cultural, economic, and political contexts. High-stakes testing as a cultural practice is connected to the sphere of meaning,

producing and legitimating the dominant narrative which affects subjectivities. Particularly, concerning the vehemence of a national curriculum and national testing, Apple (1996) insists that "all of this needs to be situated directly in larger ideological dynamics in which we are seeing an attempt by a new hegemonic blog to transform our very ideas of what education is for" (p. 38). Students' experiences are ingrained in the culture which high-stakes testing foregrounds. By highlighting students' lived experiences and understandings, we need to rethink what is seen and what is invisible on students' achievement. Brantlinger (2003) showed, for example, that the middle class parents' ideological justification makes the inequality issue invisible despite its prevalence in schooling experiences. The issue of educational inequality needs to be addressed in the dimension of ideology beyond the economic structure. The analysis of ideology and culture illuminates where high-stakes testing is grounded in terms of political, cultural, and economic settings, and how students with different backgrounds experience and make meanings throughout.

The purpose of this study is to highlight high school students' understandings of educational achievement through their lived experiences and perspectives which are constructed under a high-stakes testing environment. It focuses on the cultural aspects and functions of high-stakes testing and ideological effects on students as to their concepts of achievement, educational purposes, equal opportunity, and beliefs. To understand how students make meanings within structure and culture, this study undertakes a critical analysis of high-stakes testing and its intersectional effects of structure and culture, focusing on students' everyday experiences.

To date, regarding high-stakes testing, many studies address its impact on teaching and learning practices including achievement gap, and on the political and theoretical contexts in which it is grounded. Few studies focus on students' thinking and

experiences under high-stakes testing. In spite of numerous studies on achievement at the intersection of race, class, and gender, students' voices and perspectives are marginalized in the research. Wiggan (2007) suggests student-based inquiry, saying "There have been relatively few studies specifically addressing how students themselves define achievement, as well as what students do, feel, and think about in school" (p.323) beyond the notion of students' performance on tests with regard to achievement. Understanding students' experiences requires looking into high-stakes practices in a context of meaning-making at the micro cultural level. There also has been little attention to culture and ideology in studying educational inequality in Korea. Ideological discourses around high-stakes testing affect students' ideological formations in terms of meanings, beliefs, and needs in education. And their meaning making might be different according to their economic and social positions. Cultural processes, where ideology operates and power is implicated, involve historical and social contexts. Students' consciousness and understanding will reveal how high-stakes testing ideologically and structurally functions throughout schooling.

This dissertation explores the role of high-stakes testing in relation to students' understandings of educational achievement. In addition to the meanings which are mediated by language, this study addresses students' experiences in testing practices and how their experiences are different according to their academic and socioeconomic backgrounds. This study intends to address the following central questions:

1. How do students understand educational achievement, educational purposes, and educational opportunity in a high-stakes testing environment?
2. How do their understandings of educational opportunity differ according to their class backgrounds and levels of academic performance?

The research design is guided by a qualitative case study in order to rethink the understandings of educational achievement through students' experiences and voices. This multiple case study, which is grounded in critical theory as a research paradigm of interpretivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009), is useful to reflect on specific issues situated in the political, cultural, economic, and historical contexts. Focusing on in-depth interviews with both high-performing and low-performing high school students drawn from three schools that differ in the socioeconomic status of the students they serve, and who have experienced high-stakes testing in their lives, this study explores how they understand educational achievement and how they construct meanings of opportunity in a different way according to their socioeconomic and academic backgrounds. Qualitative research contributes to addressing the issues of educational inequality and the distribution of opportunity at the structural and cultural constructions of social reality (Riehl, 2001). In the sense that case study particularizes and maximizes learning from the meaning and experiences that the participants hold (Stake, 1994, 1995), this study pursues context-specific implications for recognizing high-stakes testing as a cultural practice.

This study attempts to add a contribution to a more complex way of understanding of students' experiences under high-stakes testing in relation to structure and culture. Specifically, by highlighting high school students' voices whose schooling is mostly immersed in high-stakes testing, its ideological and cultural aspects will be examined. Relying on the concept of ideology from the perspective of the critical theory and pursuing its usefulness for challenging the status quo, this study will be the empirical evidence to understand about living as a student in the high-stakes educational system.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature and Theoretical Framework

As long as testing takes priority throughout schooling, test results and scores become the significant indicator in determining educational achievement. High-stakes testing with life-altering consequences produces numerous debates on the philosophical and political rhetoric as well as achievement gaps and opportunity structure in a society. In addition, it affects students' learning and teachers' teaching practices, including curriculum choices and educational beliefs. A critical analysis highlights how high-stakes testing neglects the economic constraints that some students are situated in and further contributes to social and economic reproduction. Many authors have concluded that achievement corresponds to socioeconomic status, revealing the structural effects in educational attainment (Anyon, 2011; Au, 2009). This explanation primarily relies on quantitative data and numbers from large samples of students in order to look at the influence of testing.

The research on high-stakes testing also implicates cultural aspects more than economic aspects. Of course, this is not to say that culture is independent of the economic structure. The micro-level lens allows us to look at how students make sense of the educational world under high-stakes testing through their lived experiences. Beyond economic reproduction, some critical analyses turn to ideological re/production or the embedded beliefs within schooling. These studies focus on the culture, not the economy as a base. This approach is appropriate to interpret high-stakes testing as a cultural process and its function. In this study, I focus on the cultural micro level: how this type of testing impacts students' lived experiences in a high-stakes environment. In addition, at the macro level, I also take into account such issues as achievement gaps, sociocultural

beliefs, opportunity structure, and curriculum control.

In this chapter, I present relevant research as well as a theoretical framework for this study of high-stakes testing. I provide empirical evidence and theories concerning class-based cultural experiences and cultural hegemony in education, and I also rely on work on the concept of ideology and culture from the point view of critical theory and cultural theory.

NATIONAL, SOCIAL, AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF TESTING

Education policies are grounded in specific economic, cultural, and political contexts. These policies are often tied to market values, high standards, or traditional values. The emphasis on high standards through testing and accountability is prevalent, not only in the U.S. but also internationally (Apple, 1996). The political and economic discourses underpinning high-stakes testing are effectively hidden or neutralized behind the educational practices for raising standards (Carlson, 2006). It seems reasonable to use testing to improve the quality of education and to hold schools accountable. However, insufficient attention has been paid to the preexisting inequalities among students and among schools, as well as the consequential low levels of learning since these concerns did not prevail in political and cultural interests. This section deals with the rhetoric as well as the social and political contexts of high-stakes testing for the sake of raising standards.

The U.S. Context

For the past 50 years in the U.S., the primary focus of educational reform has been on assessment and accountability (Linn, 2000). Linn offers as reasons that certain kinds of assessment are inexpensive to implement and the resulting changes are visible

during the policymakers' term in office. Perhaps most of all, many people believe that scientifically managed testing entails objective information and exact measurement. Also, technology has changed test formats and scoring techniques to fit into large-scale tests. In particular, the invention of multiple-choice items has made tests easier to administer to large numbers of students. Furthermore, the bureaucratization of society has facilitated statewide and nationwide implementation of standardized assessment (Clarke, Madaus, Horn, & Ramos, 2000).

The public demand for the quality of public education has intersected with educational policies such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983), *Goals 2000*, and the *No child Left Behind* act (2002). All of these documents focus on proficiency, accountability, and standardization (Hursh, 2009). The accountability movement through high-stakes testing originates in *A Nation at Risk* (Au, 2009). In the 70s and the 80s when the U.S. economy was stagnant while the international economy was growing rapidly, the national frustration with economic depression focused negative attention on public education and represented it as failing: "American education became the scapegoat for a host of bad business decisions" (Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 4). Their voices gathered around educational reform as the antidote for national economic competitiveness. As policies make students and schools accountable for their achievement, the quality of education is interpreted mostly by students' academic performance as measured by these types of tests.

In the 90s, standards-based reform required each state to establish 'standards of learning' for each grade level and subject matter, and to test students in order to ensure their achievement (Ho & Jae, 2006; Popham, 2003). However, "the quality of the alignment between state-approved content standards and state-approved achievement tests has been very weak" (Popham, 2003, p. 31) and "high standards become so easily

co-opted by the similar language - but oppositional philosophy and opposite consequences - of standardization" (McNeil, 2000, p. 6). Through standardization and accountability, schooling was integrated into a new bureaucratic system.

The NCLB, under the Bush administration, was grounded in successful experiences in state-mandated high-stakes testing. The NCLB gained wide public support and commercial interest as well from test-related industries for test sales which amounted to $263 million in 1997 (Clarke, et al., 2000, p. 171). According to the NCLB, each state was required to develop testing from the 3rd to the 8th grades and to demonstrate 100 percent of students' proficiency by 2014. Through standardized high-stakes testing which is released to the public, official accountability is imposed on students, teachers, individual schools, and school districts. Test scores resulted in rewards or sanctions such as retention, promotion, graduation, funding, outsourcing tutoring, or closure. This act, thus, was intended to improve the quality of education and to ensure educational opportunity for the disadvantaged by raising academic standards and accountability (U.S. Department of Education, retrieved from http://www.ed.gov/esea). "The focus of educational policy shifted from school inputs to student outcomes, and from minimum competency to high proficiency standards" (J. Lee & Wong, 2004, p. 797) and it was more "performance-driven, test-driven, measurable and statistical in nature" (p.780). This policy increases contradictions of testing which the negative consequences are attached to, not to mention the frequency of testing (Shepard, 2008).

In 2009, the Obama administration proposed a competitive fund for the 'Race to the Top' program which makes each state compete in improving student achievement for higher education and career development for all, implementing rigorous standards and high-quality assessment at the state and school districts level (U.S. Department of Education, http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf). This

program acknowledges that the test-driven accountability policy narrows curriculum and lowers the quality of learning, as well as producing a culture of incompetent public education. And 10 years since the NCLB, the Obama administration has allowed flexibility from the NCLB mandates as long as reform at the local level ensures students attain college- and career readiness (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, September 23, http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases). However, despite its flexibility, this policy continues the problems of the NCLB such as neoliberal competition, corporate-model accountability, reliance on high-stakes standardized testing, and standards-based policy.

The Korean Context

In Korea, decisions regarding curriculum standards have already been made at the national level since the end of Japanese colonization (Y.-S. Park & Ban, 2005). Each administration adopted educational reform and policies which represented their ideological discourses and historic requirements. Until the 1990s, the curricular priority was on education for economic prosperity and national security. During this period, social mobility and better living conditions were seen as dependent upon education. The Confucian tradition emphasizing success and glory provided a cultural context for educational excellence while Confucianism asserted that the primary purpose of education was for character development (Chang, 2011). The popularization of education requires an objective and fair way to gain access to higher education. Testing is recognized as providing fairness to all. For the past 60 years, tests have determined the entrance and access to higher education. Thus tests in Korea have very high stakes even if their types and practices are changed by differing education policies (S.-H. Park, 2010).

Currently, the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), implemented since 1994, is the most influential on critical decisions regarding curriculum and instruction, as well as

students' futures (S.-H. Park, 2010). The CSAT is administered on one day in November for senior students by the government-funded Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation (KICE). Its purposes are to secure fair and objective selection, to promote students' higher thinking in individual subject matters, and further, to improve secondary education (KICE, retrieved from www.suneung.re.kr). The most important sections of the CAST are Korean language, mathematics, English, and science/social studies. Each section has a nine-grade system based upon the bell curve. Park (S.-H. Park, 2010) says that "a country like Korea which has such a high-stakes testing system is rare" and further "it is taken for granted among people" (p. 3). Even though the CSAT is for senior students, it affects students' experiences from high school down to even elementary school (Jeon, 2008; Kang, 2007).

In 2008, the Lee, Myung-Bak administration implemented the National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA) from elementary school through high school. Its goal, based on criterion-referenced assessment, is to support minimum academic performance for all (S. Kim, Song, Kim, & Yi, 2011). At the time when it was first proposed, implementation was not compulsory. Recently, however, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has mandated this test for all the elementary 6th, middle school 3rd, and high school 2nd grades at the national level starting from 2012 (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, retrieved from www.mest.go.kr). Elementary 6th and high school 2nd grades take tests of Korean language, English, and math. Middle school 3rd grade has to take two more subjects, science and social studies. Student achievement is rated as Excellent, Average, Basic, and Below Basic in each subject matter. Each school's level for each subject matter is publicly announced as Above Average, Basic, and Below Basic in addition to its Yearly Progress (Public Releases, Minister of Education, Science, and Technology, 2011, December 30, retrieved

from http://www.mest.go.kr). Furthermore, those results are used to determine school funding and teacher evaluation depending on school districts. Park (S.-H. Park, 2010) says:

> Schools and districts are sensitive to the test results as long as the NAEA is recently mandated and further the CSAT results are open to the public both by region and school. Although rewards and punishments according to its results are not yet given as the U.S. does, the problems of high-stakes tests emerging from implementations over the last decades occur immediately after implementation in Korea (p.17).

Thus, Korea already has a historical high-stakes testing system in place, and it affects teaching and learning practices. The chronic problems and issues all exist because Korea's educational reform is mostly grounded in standards-based policy. The high stakes of the testing system in Korea regulates curriculum and instruction and exerts life-altering consequences on students (S.-H. Park, 2010). Further, the recently mandated assessment attempts to control both schools and teachers. High-stakes testing reinforces inequalities by socioeconomic status and gender and limits access to higher education, especially to top-tier universities (M.-R. Kim, 2004). Children from families whose monthly income was above ₩5,000,000 ($4,545) scored 30 points higher on the 2008 CSAT than their counterparts whose family monthly income was below ₩2,000,000 ($1,818) (I.-H. Kim, 2010). In addition to the disparity by class, places where students live tell inequalities in education. On the 2012 CAST, 12.1% of students living in five districts which are called 'special districts in education' in Seoul obtained the average second grade in Korean, Math, and English while 4.9 % of students living in the remaining 20 districts in Seoul did (Public Release, Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, 2012, June 13, retrieved from www.kice.re.kr). The achievement level of the remaining 20 districts was below the national average.

The NAEA has many similarities to the NCLB accountability movement (I.-H.

Kim, 2010; S.-H. Park, 2010). In spite of different contexts between the two countries, the consequences of high-stakes testing and the theoretical backgrounds of approaches overlap. The reform heavily relies on the state-initiated standardized tests (S.-H. Park, 2010). Furthermore, the policy is grounded in the neoliberal beliefs about education (C.-G. Kim, 2012). Specifically, the education policy of the Lee, Myung-Bak administration aims at deregulations on schools and at specialization of high schools for educational excellence (Suh, 2009). Consequently, it increases the impact of evaluation on teachers and reinforces the school stratification between private and public schools, as well as between regions. This policy exacerbates the educational disparities among different classes and solidifies economic reproduction through education (C.-G. Kim, 2012).

Most of all, the CSAT raises the high stakes for students. In addition to college entrance, it plays a role in regulation of the curriculum throughout schools, privatization of education, and economic reproduction, while it is alleged to promote academic success. While in the U.S. context, state-mandated standardized testing in accordance with the accountability movement is a primary representation of high-stakes testing, in Korea the highest stakes are attached to the CSAT and relevant tests for college entrance. As Park (S.-H. Park, 2010) argued above, tests in Korea have high stakes, and the related problems are already chronic in classrooms and schools. However, there is little research on students' perceptions of achievement under high-stakes testing. Numerous studies on the effects of high-stakes testing have been done in the U.S. (Ho & Jae, 2006). Hence, this section relies on implications from the theoretical and empirical literature produced by U.S scholars to investigate the impact of high-stakes testing. In particular, the neoliberal agenda and critical analysis of this kind of testing will be analyzed.

High-Stakes Testing and Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is a political-economic theory which combines the logic of free choice from liberalism with the competitive market system for the purpose of maximum private profits (Apple, 2006; Hursh, 2007; Leistyna, 2007). It rejects regulative power by state and justifies privatizing all the public sectors, such as education and health, for the pursuit of profits (Apple, 1996). Individual liberty is purposeful only for economic needs. It is represented by 'economic individualism' legitimating individual inequalities and by freedom understood as choice (Apple, 1996, 2006). According to neoliberalism, the role of state is ironically ambivalent. On the one hand, when it comes to talking about social welfare, neoliberalism objects to the intervention of state because the responsibility of all the issues in life is attributed to individual choice and decision. On the other hand, it advocates the role of state for capitalistic accumulation (C.-G. Kim, 2012)

Neoliberalism ties education to economic goals and applies the competitive market rationale to schooling. Based on choice and efficiency, it frames education "promoting corporate over social welfare" (Hursh, 2009, p. 67). Under neoliberal policies, educational inequality is not a social-structural contradiction but an expression of individuals' incompetence. Neoliberal education policies tend to blame public education for low achievement and failure. Public education is easily targeted as being responsible for economic depression (Giroux, 2003c). This rationale has initiated high-stakes and accountability movements such as *A Nation at Risk*, and has become the primary mechanism of the NCLB (Au, 2009; Hursh, 2009). High-stakes testing and the accountability movement function as the most efficient and convenient form of neoliberal reform.

In Korea, since the *5.31 Educational Reform* in 1995 under the Kim, Young-Sam administration, Korean educational reform has adopted neoliberalism as its theoretical and practical foundation (B.-H. Lee, 2002). The revival of the NAEA in 2008 under the

Lee, Myung-Bak administration showed clearly that this administration focuses more on excellence and efficiency expressed in the discourse of privatization and differentiation by evaluation (C.-G. Kim, 2009). Kim (C.-G. Kim, 2012) argues that the Lee, Myung-Bak administration is the climax of the earlier dogmatic and conservative neoliberalism in that it actually implemented and at least attempted the tax cut for the rich, deregulations for global capital transition, and privatization of public sectors such as railroad, airport, water, energy and education. During this administration, for example, the autonomy of private school was expanded and the ghettoization of public general schools was intensified under the 'High School Diversification 300 Project' (2008). The nationwide test is administered for every student and every school. Through the 'Plan of Zero below Basic Standards' which mimicked NCLB, educational achievement is reduced to test scores and its responsibility is given to each school (C.-G. Kim, 2012).

However, Korean public education did not exactly have the issue of low achievement that neoliberalism problematized at first (C.-G. Kim, 2009; B.-H. Lee, 2002). The educational problems in Korea are instead more concerned with overheating competition, privatization, reproduction, educational polarization, educational alienation, and instrumental learning (Chang, 2011; W.-G. Jeong, 2011; I.-H. Kim, 2010). Nonetheless, neoliberalism produces a successful discourse to explain the failure of public education and the superiority of private education, including private tutoring. This discourse justifies free school choice and liberalizes private schools.

In 2000, only 3 percent of students went to the self-funded and autonomous private schools (B.-H. Lee, 2002). Consequently, the principle of free choice has been applied to support a few private schools and has helped make those more privileged and aristocratic, and to instigate excessive competition. In contrast to the ostensible agenda for freedom of neoliberalism, this policy does not recognize students' democratic

participation and free decision making. Liberalization is only available to administrators and policy makers; students and teachers are under their control (C.-G. Kim, 2009).

In addition, neoliberal educational policies narrow educational values to achievement and differentiation at the expense of social integration and equality. While these policies ostensibly argue for educational efficiency, they effectively disguise the huge amount of money spent on testing. School becomes the academy for raising scores and parents suffer from excessive expense on private tutoring.

With regard to expense of schools and a scale of testing industry caused by the NCLB, Leistyna (2007) asserts that:

> Schools now give nearly 50milion tests a year, and the annual values of this market ranges from $400 million to $700 million ("the Testing Industry's Big Four", 2006). The General Accounting Office estimates that by 2008, up to $5.4 billion will be spent by states trying to meet the requirements of this legislation (Miner, 2004/2005). However, this figure doesn't include the enormous costs of prep sessions, practice tests, scoring and reporting, data storage, and let's not forget the nearly $7 billion-a-year market for instructional materials (p. 101).

The focus on testing leads to strengthening private education and benefiting corporate power in education. While neoliberalism argues for deregulation, its application to education policy shows that it is very regulative. It seems to believe in meritocratic equality and open opportunity, but it actually supports a rhetoric of inequality (Au, 2009). Neither preexisting inequality nor the consequential inequality is an educational concern under neoliberalism.

Apple (1996, 2006) has identified the hegemonic alliance between neoliberalism and neoconservatism and its instigation of privatization, centralization, and differentiation in education. They support a national curriculum and national testing, and support raising standards and accountability for achievement in schools. There is, therefore, a kind of 'ideological umbrella' in relation to educational discourses for raising standards and

academic attainment. Hursh (2007) shows how high-stakes educational reforms situate education within neoliberal and neoconservative policies. Even if policies have the purpose of improving academic achievement and reducing the achievement gap, in reality they replace social democratic approaches with neoliberal discourses in education, "promoting standardized testing, accountability, competition, school choice, and privatization" (p. 494). These neoliberal policies produce a strong demand for educational accountability in public education, privatization, and free competition. Giroux (2003b) and Apple (2006) criticize 'corporate models of schooling' for the intrusion of capital into public values. The corporate culture displaces democratic values in education and dilutes discussions related to equal opportunity and educational justice. In high-stakes testing, schooling is transformed into a process of gaining scores produced as 'reified knowledge' (DeLissovoy & McLaren, 2003) and the resulting structural effects are not considered and are even promoted. Neoliberalism, therefore, becomes a dominant way of conceptualizing education.

Noddings (2007) points out the language used in high-stakes testing plays a role in forming such beliefs. She said, "The deliberate choice of vocabulary sometimes facilitates policies that would otherwise be highly questionable" (p. 210). For example, the ways that education policy talks about equality, excellence, or objectivity seem persuasive. In conveying particular beliefs, however, it neglects others. The term 'equality' used in these neoliberal educational policies is contradictory to the 'equality' of opportunities which some students are deprived of. The interpretation of these policies needs to reveal the political and ideological contexts behind the discourses. Lipman (2004) considered the ideological force of policies and showed "how policy discourses are linked to economic, political, and cultural interest" (p. 14). Policies use words like standards or accountability in testing as if they supported the improvement of learning.

On the contrary, they may have as much to do with test preparation and bureaucratic control. It is insightful to look at how high-stakes testing promotes particular beliefs and ideologies in the arena of cultural practices.

High-stakes testing reframes learning as academic attainment based on the standardized tests, thus rendering the teaching culture oppressive to both students and teachers (Costigan, 2002). Students are deprived of autonomy to learn and to construct their own knowledge as subjects who are situated in social, cultural, historical, and political contexts (Freire, 1998). Students have been objects in 'the banking system of education' (p. 30), who are passively engaged in fragmented knowledge accumulation which is contradictory to their lived experiences. Testing becomes a structural tool for punishment and control of students who are racially and economically disadvantaged, stigmatizing 'other' races, cultures, and classes (DeLissovoy & McLaren, 2003).

Kincheloe (2004) notes that "knowledge production and curriculum development are always and forever historically embedded and culturally inscribed processes" (p. 98). High-stakes testing is used to legitimate official school knowledge and makes "teachers discouraged from taking into account the social, cultural, and economic backgrounds of their student and the needs and interests that emerge from them" (p. 14). Furthermore, it is based on the belief that the academic ability is individual and is a matter of attitudes. Thus, education policies, which embody politics, privilege particular groups (Hinchey, 2010) and locate certain people in the lower tier of the social and cultural hierarchy (Darder, 2012). High-stakes testing polarizes students' educational experiences based upon their class and race backgrounds. Leonardo (2007) suggests that educational reforms such as NCLB undertake the construction of whiteness through the exclusion of non-whites while producing an individualistic rhetoric and strong deficit model toward them.

Madaus and Clarke (2001) insist that raising standards does not raise the quality of education, and that current high-stakes testing is not equitable in terms of race, culture, and gender because it inflicts more harm on minorities. High standards are not only punitive for minorities but also undermine academics (McNeil, 2000). High-stakes testing reinforces social stratification and penalizes students who have few opportunities in their social and economic contexts (Lipman, 2004).

Certain cultural and ideological discourses are embedded in high-stakes testing (Anyon, 2011). Based on the belief that positive rationality embraces objectivity, fairness, and neutrality, the high-stakes standardized tests play a role in sorting students (Au, 2011). In fact, this supposedly meritocratic distribution contributes to reproduction of socioeducational inequalities rather than transformations of students. Kim (M.-R. Kim, 2004) argues that the meritocratic structure reinforces unequal opportunities, especially for women's access to higher education, because the opportunity structure is more affected by parents' educational level and socioeconomic status. Also, Chang (2011) criticizes meritocracy in education for damaging democratic justice. Nonetheless, paradoxically, testing is alleged to be a means to challenge the social and economic hierarchy (Au, 2009). Thus, testing conceals structural inequalities and different opportunities among groups. Consequently, it serves a particular ideological purpose and inculcates certain forms of consciousness (Apple, 2004). deMarrais and LeCompte (1999) conclude that this is related to a middle-class ideology based on meritocracy and competition, and this ideology is engaged in the production of deficit views and in the concealment of asymmetrical distribution of merit. The distributing mechanism of meritocracy corresponds to neoliberalism in the name of free choice and competition, neglecting the existing structural hierarchy.

Meritocracy and the achievement ideology are justified in the hidden curriculum

of high-skates testing. Au (2009) states:

> What is evident in the implementation of high-stakes testing is that the tests tacitly enforce educational inequality, standardization, disempowerment, and alienation. The hidden curriculum, however, is not the manifestation of complete economic determinism in the classroom. Rather, the hidden curriculum of high-stakes testing has more to do with establishing the boundaries of validity and legitimacy and enforcing these borders through bureaucratic and institutional hierarchies (p. 140).

Hidden messages or rhetoric are entrenched in educational practices such as testing. In this sense, the definition of achievement already means testing rather than learning. Thus high-stakes testing functions as both a 'technological and ideological apparatus' (Au, 2009, p. 39; 2011). While high-stakes testing affects daily educational experiences through schooling, it is necessary to investigate its ideologies and theories affecting students' meaning-making.

ASSESSMENT, ACHIEVEMENT, AND HIGH-STAKES TESTING

High-stakes testing produces a variety of educational debates since it is frequently used to make a decision in the educational career of students. High-stakes tests became the main indicator of students' placement/tracking, promotion/retention, and graduation and the overall quality of schooling (Heubert & Hauser, 1999). With regard to implications of high-stakes testing, numerous studies talk about academic gains/irrelevance (e.g. Amrein & Berliner, 2002, 2003; Carnoy & Loeb, 2002; Nichols, Glass, & Berliner, 2006; Raymond & Hanushek, 2003; Rosenshine, 2003), its impacts on learning (Alexander & Riconscente, 2005; Jones, 2001; Smith, 1991), teaching beliefs and practices (Abrams, et al., 2003; Cimbricz, 2002; Dever & Carlston, 2009; Vogler, 2002), and the control on teachers and students of color (Hoffman, Assaf, & Paris, 2001; Madaus & Clarke, 2001; McNeil, 2000; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001).

High-stakes testing generally makes an appeal to 'achievement.' It promotes a narrow achievement based on standardization (Lipman, 2004). Educational achievement, however, encompasses more than that in relation to the purposes of schooling (Noddings, 2007). In a high-stakes era, achievement is easily confined to academic excellence. As to what it means by achievement which is directly emphasized, it tacitly and explicitly affects students' perceptions of educational achievement through their experiences under high-stakes testing.

Purposes of Assessment in Curriculum

A question like what should be achieved through education is philosophical (Noddings, 2007). Comprehensively, it is concerned with the aims of education. On the other hand, it implies the purposes of schooling. Further, educational purposes vary from person to person, probably because people live in different times and places with different values and expectations. The curriculum, which is socially and historically embedded, depends on the underlying beliefs and values systems in relation to the purposes of schooling. Some think schooling should promote students' self-actualization and help them to obtain a decent job, and others argue schooling is the impetus for the national prosperity and improves the quality of people's lives. Others focus on the role of education in knowledge construction or human development. The interpretations and priorities of educational achievement are at times conflicting. Nonetheless, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Kliebard, 1995). The curriculum is organized around what people think should be achieved through schooling.

The term 'assessment' is often used interchangeably with 'test' (Clarke, et al., 2000; Popham, 2003) or occasionally with 'evaluation.' Although these terms imply nuanced meanings depending on usage, their practices are much more equivalent in that

they are concerned with collecting evidence and analyzing it to interpret how students perform and how effective instruction is. Popham (2003) mentions testing as an 'inference-making enterprise' between learning and teaching. He clarifies that testing plays an instructional role throughout curriculum and instruction.

As the part of curriculum field, testing or evaluation is traditionally valued in the social efficiency movement or scientific movement (Kliebard, 1995; Shepard, 2000). Scientific curriculum-making is interested in rating systems that determine how efficiently the curriculum, as well as other components of the educational system, functions. This type of curriculum entails more measureable objectives and standardization in the system. Bobbitt's "differentiated curriculum" and Snedden's "vocational education" are examples of the scientific management of curriculum (Kliebard, 1995). In addition, "the mental measurement movement which provided the technology necessary for the kind of assessment and prediction" (p. 90), specifically, I.Q. development, and Thorndike's behaviorism are critical for the philosophy and history of testing (Tyack, 1974).

In a similar vein, Tyler (1949) lists the four parts of the process of curriculum development: educational objectives, content selection, organization, and evaluation. He relates evaluation to a process of "identifying the strengths and weakness of the plans" (p. 105). Also, he acknowledges multiple methods of evaluation and the frequency of evaluation during semesters. With his emphasis on objectivity, reliability, and validity of instruments, the purposes of evaluation are linked to knowing students' needs and helping them to attain educational objectives. As such, the use of results as well as the coherence of objectives affects the quality of learning. However, Tyler's objectives rely primarily on observable behaviors as evidence. Thus unobservable aspects of learning tend to be neglected.

Scientific epistemology in curriculum development emphasizes control and measurement (Eisner, 1979). Measurement requires standardized outcomes for easy and systematic interpretation. However, the excessive focus on testing makes curriculum development centered on only "curriculum as technology" which is supposed to be one among curriculum orientations (p. 50). Eisner warns:

> The use of evaluation to revise the curriculum is in my view one of the central functions of evaluation. It is a type of feedback mechanism for educational improvement that diminishes the tendency to use evaluation practices as a means of classifying students, rewarding them, or selecting the able from the rest (p. 171).

Continuous feedback for curriculum revision throughout the entire process of curriculum development contributes to the identification of students' needs and the quality of curriculum. Evaluation thus is intimately tied to curriculum and instruction, not just to the measurement of outcomes.

Bloom et al. (Bloom, Hastings, & Madaus, 1971) critique the misuse of evaluation in exchange for merely selecting and grading. They affirm that testing for classification hardly improves the quality of teaching and learning, and argue that evaluation aids effective teaching. According to its purpose and time, evaluation is differently used. To determine how students are competent with a given learning task for the entire course, summative evaluation is useful. For learning motivation and modification of instruction, formative evaluation is more appropriate in that it has a "close relationship to instructional scaffolding" (Shepard, et al., 2005, p. 275). Hence, evaluation should not confine curriculum to a predetermined task.

Shepard (2000) focuses on the role of classroom assessment "as a part of instruction to support and enhance learning" (p. 4). Contrary to the social efficiency framework, classroom assessment is necessarily grounded in social constructionist theory.

She concludes that interlocking aspects between the social efficiency movement, the hereditarian theory of ability, and scientific measurement result in the separation between instruction and assessment. In this sense, learning is equivalent to testing alone (p. 5), which affects the type of knowledge as well as the process of learning. The preference for objective and standardized testing leads to a concept of knowledge as the accumulation of information without interaction between individuals and social contexts. Shephard states that "both development and leaning are primarily social processes" (p. 7) on the basis of social interactive construction. Assessment does not exist for controlling curriculum and instruction. Varied and ongoing assessments help to construct the learning culture in the classroom.

Ideally, the purpose of assessment lies in the improvement of learning. At times, a certain kind of assessment is used for grading and decision-making. McTighe and O'Connor (2005) advise that even if summative assessments tend to be evaluative, still they should be used to guide learning. In addition, grading and reporting via multiple ways of assessment need to be based on performance expectations rather than comparison to other students (Shepard, et al., 2005). Teachers need to utilize appropriately each assessment tool in order to meet students' needs on the basis of their prior knowledge, the zone of proximal development (ZPD), and interests. Then assessment will be more responsive to students' own cultural knowledge for equal opportunity of learning (Shepard, et al., 2005, p. 295). Assessment gives teachers chances to understand students' experiences and not to emphasize the deficit knowledge. Ultimately, assessment is the practice of collecting information about how students make meanings through instruction and how instruction is meaningful and effective for their development. When the coherence between learning and assessment is broken, assessment merely means to judge students' abilities and to classify them.

On the other hand, external and large-scale assessment has its own purpose from the macro dimensions of policy making and curriculum evaluation (Shepard, et al., 2005). It is useful for collecting data "to monitor achievement trends over time, to evaluate educational programs…to identify schools with greatest needs for improvement" (p. 307). It gives teachers information about students' strengths and weaknesses (Popham, 2003). Noddings (2004), nevertheless, contends that ultimately "high stakes tests are not used for individual diagnosis and can only point us to tasks on which many fail" (p. 268). The caution is that "a test designed and validated for one purpose may not be valid for other purpose" (Popham, 2003, p. 307). For example, the excessive emphasis on efficiency and the cost primarily relying on standardized multiple choice items might destroy test validity and authenticity. It needs be clarified if this efficiency is for improving education or for assigning consequences to students.

Effects of High-Stakes Testing on Curriculum and Achievement

Recent studies show that high-stakes testing does not actually support educational purposes specified in curriculum standards (Jang, 2011; W.-G. Jeong, 2011) and, furthermore, it creates a huge achievement gap between groups from diverse backgrounds and regions (Baek & Kim, 2007). Ahn (2008) points out the growing socioeconomic inequalities in academic achievement of high school students. Achievement is mediated by private education in proportion to income. However, his conclusion focuses on individual students' effort, time, and amount of reading. On the other hand, Jeong (2011) states that current high-stakes testing serves merely for social classification and not for educational fairness and educational aims since it has a tendency to be subject to the fortuity of social conditions and backgrounds. Moreover, it emphasizes primarily instrumental subjects such as Korean language, English, and math. Thus other, perhaps

more important, educational aims are ignored.

In terms of psychological effects in relation to high-stakes testing, Jang (2011) surveyed 205 senior students' perceptions immediately after taking the CSAT. He used pictures and writings as tools to analyze students' attitudes and emotions. He recognized negative emotions such as stress, futility, and anger. Many students pointed out the unfairness that a single test would determine their future. Furthermore, he discusses the contradiction of the CSAT. It functions merely in reaching a final decision and sorting out. It does not supply feedback and appropriate information for improvement of student achievement. It relies only on multiple choice items for convenience and efficiency. This is not congruent with educational aims as well as its purposes (Jang, 2011).

Students' test scores become the indicator for evaluating the quality of schools and teachers, starting in 2012, in most districts. As a result of mandatory implementation of the NAEA in 2012 throughout the country, the Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union did an online survey of 355 elementary, middle, and high schools and reported numerous deviations in teaching and learning practices. For example, teachers are forced to do test-prep, wasting early morning and after-school time as well as regular instruction time. In addition, P.E. classes and school events are replaced with 'teaching to the test' and students are forced to buy extra-work books (The Korean Teachers and Education Workers Union, 2012, June 20, retrieved from http://www.eduhope.net).

Now, in public education, high-stakes testing based on standardized tests has become the critical determinant for funding, promoting, tracking, labeling, and evaluating the quality of institutions. Testing directly affects curriculum including content and knowledge form as well as pedagogical structure. Au (2007) proves, using a meta-synthesis, that high-stakes testing is linked to curricula control, more specifically "subject matter contraction," "fractured knowledge form," and "teacher-centered pedagogy" (p.

262). At the classroom level, testing mostly leads the instructional focus to 'teaching to the test.' Tested subject matters are valued at the expense of others' instruction time, and in addition, particular knowledge which is not appropriate for multiple-choice formats is excluded. For example, many elementary school teachers report that social studies in primary levels is being neglected due to curriculum control and narrowing (Boyle-Baise, Hsu, Johnson, Serriere, & Stewart, 2008; Brophy & Alleman, 2008).

High-stakes testing exerts a significant influence on instruction in the classroom. Diamond (2007) conducted a case study to inquire how high-stakes testing policies affect teaching practices, using interviews with teachers and administrators from 13 elementary schools and direct observations in eight elementary schools. Policy messages are transmitted through teachers who altered content area rather than pedagogical strategy (p. 297). Whereas the high quality of pedagogy is important for the improvement of low-achieving students, especially students of color and lower-class students, teachers' instructional responses to high-stakes testing are not related to reducing educational inequality. Thus, testing policies are no longer driven by their original purposes, such as the improvement of opportunities for students and equal opportunity.

Curricular control is a threat to teachers' professional autonomy (Anagnostopoulos, 2003; Dever & Carlston, 2009). Teachers lose their control over curricula enactment to prepare students for tests. Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) got opinions from nationwide teachers and informed that education which mandated testing focuses differs from good education which teachers think. Moreover, teachers feel pressure to raise scores of students and consequently they use instruction time to prepare for test taking. Vogler (2002) surveyed teachers and showed how teachers changed their teaching practices to attain high scores at the expense of their own teaching interests. In addition, they face pressures and doubt the validity of test itself (Smith, 1991). The

curriculum is subverted into 'curriculum as test-prep' and teaching is transformed by standardization (McNeil, 2000). Standardized high-stakes testing plays a part in the organizational de-skilling of teachers (p. 17). McNeil concludes that "it is the purpose of the accountability system to render education into a technical enterprise" (p. 270) without caring about students' needs and contexts. Technical practices cannot address the highly complex and multidimensional nature of learning (Alexander & Riconscente, 2005). More reliance on teacher-directed pedagogy and a narrower curriculum means that high-stakes testing has, in effect, lowered standards (Hursh, 2009).

Ultimately, curriculum and instruction is subordinated to testing in contrast to their original purpose. Au (2012) contends:

> In a most basic and general sense then, high-stakes testing has become the curriculum: The tests have, with increasing intensity, become the tool for structuring educational environments in ways that also shape both what knowledge is assessed and how that knowledge is accessed through pedagogic discourse (p. 45).

Curriculum and instruction are organized around high-stakes testing by state power. Its influences on students' educational experiences do not exactly match its purpose. The achievement gaps between groups, especially from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds, get wider (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Madaus & Clarke, 2001) because consideration on students' social, economic, and cultural contexts has not been seen in a high-stakes testing environment.

Amrein and Berliner (2002) found that the effects of testing are not consistent. Scores randomly go up or down. Rosenshine (2003) states that the average National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) significantly increases in some states but not throughout all states. Furthermore, it is not obvious whether the increase comes from testing or test-based exercises (Nichols, et al., 2006). Haney (2000) showed how certain

data were excluded to confirm the improvement of students' performance in Texas. Consequently, high-stakes policies harm students' achievement, especially students of color and students with disabilities. In the research on the impact of accountability on the issue of racial and socioeconomic equity, Lee and Wong (2004) concluded that performance-driven policy is more regulatory, focusing mostly on sanctions and does not improve the equal distribution of adequate resources in terms of per-pupil expenditure, class size, and teacher quality. In a comprehensive meta-analysis of articles related to exit exams and its high stakes, Holme et al. (Holme, Richards, Jimerson, & Cohen, 2010) claim that intended benefits of exit exam policies were not positively applied to at-risk students and racial minorities in terms of students achievement, educational outcomes, and school response. This result contradicts the purpose of these testing policies.

Nonetheless, now accountability through testing is expanded to more subject matters, grades and numbers of testing (Hoffman, et al., 2001). On the basis of test results, policy makers seek educational reform as to tracking, promotion, and graduation. Centralized control forces teachers to do testing instruction and not to respond to the needs of students.

On the other hand, some analyses also showed that minority or low income students' achievement is not negatively affected by testing. Students in accountability states made actual progress in test scores. Indeed, some studies appear to show positive effects of high-stakes testing. Carnoy and Loeb (2002) compared students in high-accountability states with students in states with little or no high-stakes in terms of math performance on the NAEP (National Association of Educational Progress) and 9^{th} grade retention rates. Their results show that the former students perform significantly better than the latter, and further that the former did not have significantly higher retention rates than the latter. Rerunning Amrein and Berliner's data and exactly reversing their

conclusions, Raymond and Hanushek (2003) contend students' math gains on the NAEP work better in the accountability system than in a low or no accountability system.

Accountability policy aims to improve the quality of schooling. Along these lines, Linn (2000, 2003) showed dramatic gains in proficiency after a few decades of the accountability system and consequently concluded that NCLB contributes to the improvement of education. Stecher (2002) examined the effects of high-stakes testing on students, teachers, and schools. According to this research, high-stakes testing affects them in a positive way: increasing students' motivation, getting knowledge about students, identifying strength and weakness in teaching practices, making better resource allocation, and evaluating educational program (p.86).

However, many studies focusing on students, in particular, ethnic minorities, concluded that the effects are more negative than positive. This type of testing may contribute to high drop-out, push-out, retention, and low graduation rates (Amrein & Berliner, 2003; Hursh, 2007). Minority students are often the main target for negative consequences rather than for rewards. McNeil (2000) views testing as a new structure of discrimination. Leonardo (2007) criticizes NCLB's 'color-blindness' in which whites still benefit much more than minority students. That is, NCLB does not remedy the structural consequences of the social, historical, economic, and cultural contexts of the disadvantaged. This is because their life experiences are not taken into account in testing (Hughes & Bailey, 2001).

In this larger context, we can see that high-stakes testing is not only closely related to the opportunity structure of a society, but may also even become the main obstacle for equal opportunity. Given the unequal structure where students experience schooling, educational policies shed light on the positive aspirations for academic improvements through state-mandated standardized tests, in particular. Individual

decisions and efforts, whether by student, parent, or teacher, are alleged to hold accountability for academic achievement and educational attainment. The issue of responsibility for achievement is not separated from the explanation of achievement.

CULTURAL POLITICS AND CLASS-RELATED CULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN EDUCATION

Many studies of high-stakes testing have focused on teaching and instruction from the perspective of teachers and administrators. When the focus is on students, it becomes clear that their accumulated outcomes are mediated by social class and the other factors mentioned above. That is, high-stakes testing reinforces the reproduction of class inequalities. On the other hand, high-stakes testing itself is an ideological practice entailing cultural and political beliefs and values (Au, 2009; Leonardo, 2007). Whether seemingly, practically, even unintentionally, or not, this practice is grounded in particular beliefs regarding educational achievement. The aforementioned usages of such terms as excellence, efficiency, and accountability exemplify its ideological groundings.

The interpretation of high-stakes testing as an educational practice should be linked to both the structure and the culture in which it is rooted. It does not only affect students' educational and economic outcomes, but also shapes all other areas of their lives. Therefore, a rigorous examination of the cultural aspects of high-stakes testing should be an essential tool to look at its function in students' educational experiences. While examining the structure is useful in explaining the overall social reproduction, culture demonstrates how and why it occurs (MacLeod, 2008). Cultural theories focus on the complexities of structure and culture (Foley, 2010).

The simultaneous analysis of the realms of meaning and material structure is applied to the understanding of education. Brown and De Lissovoy (2011) provide, for

instance, a theoretical dialectic of "both the social structure and cultural representations of race and racism"(p.599). Their understanding of racism is concerned with the accumulation/exploitation in unequal economic relations as well as the construction of white supremacy. Furthermore, it enables researchers to look at individuals' coping strategies with these conditions. The following sections address how the cultural analysis in education gets focused. These sections also review its history, and explore specific empirical literature that takes into account both structural and cultural aspects.

A Turn to Culture

Orthodox Marxism explains why working-class students perform less well than their middle-class counterparts and consequently obtain working-class jobs. Its primary analytical tool is the overarching notion of economic structure. Working-class students do not own the means of production so that their social relations as well as economic relations are reproduced. Furthermore, as Bowles and Gintis contend, schooling is organized around inequitable class relations. Economic determinism, in spite of its flexibility, contends that social realities correspond to economic realities (Marx, 2008). With regard to achievement, numerous studies frame their arguments with correspondence theory, which affirms that achievement is subordinate to socioeconomic status, which consequently contributes to social reproduction.

However, some social reproduction theories explain different paths on the spectrum of structure and consciousness/ human agency. These studies move away from structural functionalism and economic reductionism regarding consciousness as a reflex of the relations of production. Instead, consciousness is influenced by the social structure, not passively determined. These theories acknowledge individuals' autonomy in their social and cultural settings for resistance (Giroux, 1983a; MacLeod, 2008). "It begins

with the assumption that all people have the capacity and ability to produce knowledge and to resist domination" (Darder, Baltodano, & Torres, 2003, p. 14). Bowles and Gintis insist that school plays a role in socialization according to class, and as a result, economic reproduction and ideological reproduction occur (Giroux, 1983b). School instills a certain value system to support a capitalist economy (MacLeod, 2008). Bowled and Gintis deal with social reproduction from an ideological level as well as class.

Bourdieu (2000) clarifies the issue of reproduction with the concept of cultural capital. Exclusive cultural capital, which is unequally distributed, helps students from the dominant culture succeed in school. The hierarchical educational system tends to "reproduce the distribution of cultural capital by proportioning academic success to the amount of cultural capital bequeathed by the family" (p. 61). Though he acknowledges that cultural capital does not exactly overlap with economic capital, Bourdieu argues that "the yield of academic capital (which is a converted form of cultural capital) depends on the economic and social capital" (p. 67). Academic success is not independent of money and culture. Schools reinforce "class-based systems of behavior and dispositions that reproduce the existing dominant society" (Giroux, 2003a, p. 54). As a result, school is embedded in unequal cultural distribution although it is alleged to be a neutral mechanism. The cultural effect is a powerful dimension of student achievement.

Although social reproduction primarily signifies reproduction by social class, it is "more than simply a case of economic and class position; it also involves social, cultural, and linguistic factors " (McLaren, 2003, p. 90), which leads resistance theorists to pay more attention to the role of school culture and at the same time to question how schooling is influenced by the logic of capital. However, this is not to say that they deny structural effects on student achievement.

Cultural studies do not attend exclusively to the dualism of the superstructure and

the structure (Cho, 2010). Rather, they highlight the autonomy of culture which is not recognized by deterministic Marxism, which argues for the subordination of the superstructure (Mouffe, 1979). Cultural theorists see schooling as a cultural practice, including contexts such as politics, economy, and culture. Apple (1996, 2004) claims that schooling supports agendas such as visions, knowledge, needs, identity, disciplines, and values. "Education is deeply implicated in the politics of culture" (Apple, 1996, p. 22). Thus, the ideological umbrella needs also to be examined. This umbrella functions to keep us from serious consideration of social justice, opportunity, and equality issues in education. Ultimately this system disadvantages students from 'other' genders, races, and classes. Therefore, we need to rethink how our beliefs and values about educational achievement are formed and organized. In educational analysis, "culture does not cancel out class as a central category of politics. On the contrary, a radical cultural politics recognizes both the strengths and limitations of a class oriented analytic paradigm" (Giroux, 2010, p. 51).

In this regard, for example, Giroux (2010), in his critique of neoliberalism, contends that considering only class determinism fails to look at values, beliefs, and subjectivities which are created by neoliberalism. "In opposition to an overly determined notion of class politics" (p. 51), he showed how neoliberalism gains assent through a cultural and ideological process. It not only directly appeals to commodification but also normalizes how we value the pursuit of commodities as a virtue in everyday life and practices. Thus, he concludes that "neoliberalism has to be understood and challenged as both an economic theory and a powerful public pedagogy and cultural politics" (p. 61). Schooling which is dominated by neoliberal education policies also needs to be examined as a cultural practice.

On the other hand, culture has educational possibilities for the production of new

consciousness as well as awareness and resistance. Apple (1996) notes that "cultural politics is also, and profoundly, about the resources we employ to challenge existing relations, to defend those counter hegemonic forms that now exist, or to bring new forms into existence" (p. 21). Many variations of this theory are between the superstructure and the structure (Cho, 2010). Cultural politics focuses more on meanings and subjectivities within the superstructure (Leonardo, 2010a). This notion not only affirms that culture is relatively autonomous but also influential.

Ideology

The more focused interest in culture leads the critical theorist to ideology in education, in order to understand schooling in a more complex way. Leonardo (2010a) comments on this trend:

> The turn to culture can be linked to an equally powerful turn to studies of ideology. Turning to ideology is not simply favoring an analysis of the superstructure as an antidote to the limitation of base studies. It is an entire way of explaining social and cultural relations, including material processes (p. 9).

Ideology functions in the arena of curriculum development and educational practices and produces certain values and norms. School is the place where economic relations are represented and at the same time ideologies are reproduced and legitimated. For instance, high-stakes policies promote certain types of beliefs and attitudes such as competition, hierarchy, or individualism in the guise of open opportunity and accountability. Through high-stakes testing practices, hierarchical distribution is naturalized while educational alienation and opportunity structures which reflect political and economic contexts are largely ignored.

The high-stakes testing environment of education, which is constructed in specific sociocultural, political, and economic structures, affects students' everyday educational

experiences (Au, 2009), including their knowledge, beliefs, and values. Furthermore, high-stakes testing itself is embedded in particular ideologies promoting certain needs and interests (Anyon, 2011; Kincheloe, 2004; Leistyna, 2007). McLaren (2003) claims that ideological meanings, linked to the power of certain groups, permeates all social life. Thus, the concept of ideology is a useful way of analyzing students' constructed experiences through schooling (Leonardo, 2003b). As mentioned above in 'A Turn to Culture', to avoid dualism between consciousness and structure and to elaborate more fully a dialectical notion, the study of ideology and culture needs to be revisited (Giroux, 2001). This theory attends to "everyday life in which subjectivity and culture are treated as more than a reflex of the needs of capital and its institutions" (pp. 120-121). In order to frame its arguments more clearly with regard to ideological impacts on students' understandings, this section draws on the concept of ideology as it is analyzed by critical theorists.

Marx (2008) asserts that consciousness is produced on the basis of material relations. More specifically, he declares in *The German Ideology (1998)*:

> Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being, and the being of men is their actual life-process…Morality, religion, metaphysics, and all the rest of ideology as well as the forms of consciousness corresponding to these, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence (Marx, 1998, p. 42).

Consciousness is grounded in material bases. Class consciousness is formed by the relations of production. Ideology, from idealism, is an illusion or falsehood because idealism asserts that consciousness produces social life. For Marx, ideology generally represents 'false consciousness'; that is, a certain class cannot recognize its own class interests. For example, bourgeois ideology is an illusion justifying accumulation and exploitation. He understands ideology as a negative term and puts it in the conscious domain as well. Ideology is inevitably engaged in a distortion of reality and

circumvention of material bases. Thus, the false imagination created by power serves as legitimation for the dominant system based on specific class interests (Apple, 2004; Carlson, 2006).

In this regard, Freire (1998) writes that "education is ideological" (p. 112), which means schooling entails the reproduction of false consciousness. He warns against the power of ideology as the capacity to tame. He takes the specific example of 'globalization', which hides colonial and economic exploitation between countries. He attends to the manipulative power of an ideology that "anesthetizes the mind, confuses curiosity, [and] blurs perception" (p. 117).

In opposition to notions of dichotomy and deterministic structure, the Frankfurt school and neo-Marxists extend material relations to include the contexts of race, gender, culture, and ideology as multiple forms of dominations (Kincheloe, 2004). In his critique of class essentialism, McCarthy (1988) emphasizes the role of ideology and culture in dominant social formations. Each location of race, class, gender, or culture is not reduced to itself in isolation but interacts reciprocally with the others. Furthermore, the concept of ideology is extended to the spheres of the unconsciousness, material practices, and critical consciousness (Giroux, 1983a, 2001). The orthodox Marxist perspective which takes ideology as true or false is likely to miss the notion that ideology is the medium people use to understand and identify the world (Eagleton, 2007), as well as the way in which it makes room for agency and for alternative forms of consciousness (Au, 2012). Ideology includes multiple aspects such as the mode of domination and the mode of struggle.

A relatively autonomous culture allows for these possibilities. Althusser (2001) suggests "a relative autonomy of the superstructure with respect to the base" and "a reciprocal action of the superstructure on the base" (p. 91). He agrees that the state serves

the interests of the ruling class and categorizes the state apparatus as 'repressive' or 'ideological' by its function. He insists that, "All ideological state apparatuses, whatever they are, contribute to the same result: the reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation" (p. 104). All these ideological institutions or apparatuses operate to reproduce the structure.

Althusser's ideology is "an imaginary relations to real relations" (Althusser, 2001, p. 113). While it is illusion or distortion, it is still based on class realities. Ideology misrepresents the relations of production and contributes to reproduction of the existing order. As an ideological apparatus, school serves to bolster the capitalist enterprise and its legitimacy. Leonardo (2003a) applies this concept of ideology as illusion that both Marx and Althusser elaborate, to racial ideology. Occasionally, a certain ideology is false and illusionary for the sake of domination. For example, 'race' is a social and political invention by whites who wanted to make a hierarchy between people, which is not based on the real (Leonardo, 2005).

The distinctions between Marx and Althusser are that Marx connects ideology to the domain of consciousness, whereas Althusser connects it to unconsciousness. Also Marx's concept of ideology has little autonomy whereas Althusser's has relative autonomy and material underpinnings. For Althusser, "ideology is not an aberration to consciousness, which provides ideology's sense of autonomy, but rather an integral part of it embedded and unrecognized in the unconsciousness" (Leonardo, 2010b, p. 200). His ideology is linked to affective and unconscious relations with the world. Eagleton (2007) cites Althusser's contention that "ideology is not primarily a matter of 'ideas': it is a structure which imposes itself upon us without necessarily having to pass through conscious at all" (p. 148). In a sense, ideology operates as habitual practices at the unconscious level. It is possible to base one's actions in a certain ideology without being

aware of it and to act against their interests. Leonardo (2010b) refers to the case of white mothers having children in an interracial marriage, who, even so, object to affirmative action. These mothers' actions may be categorized as the unconscious racism. Those actions are obviously not congruent with the child's interest.

In this way, ideology operates in the unconscious sphere. This kind of ideology is referred to by Marcuse (1964) as false needs. False needs are "superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression" (p. 5). Giroux (2001) also highlights Marcuse' concept of ideology:

> Domination is rooted historically not only in the socioeconomic conditions of society, but also in the sedimented history or structure of needs that constitute each person's disposition and personality. For Marcuse, ideology as repression is a historical construct rooted in the reified relations of everyday life (Giroux, 2001, p. 147).

Thus, this type of ideology situates human beings under a certain kind of social control that makes them identify their external needs with a reality imposed by technological rationality. Commodities overtake the free ownership of desires and precondition the status quo. True consciousness is subjugated to ideology as false needs. Ideology functions for assimilation between classes, who then share the needs and desires. At the unconscious level, ideologies organize everyday experiences which seem to be 'natural' and are taken for granted.

Naturalization at the conscious or unconscious level works as production and reinforcement to strengthen the existing order. As a central function of ideology, Bonilla-Silva (2010) identifies ideologies used by whites to justify racial inequality. More specifically, those frames are "abstract liberalism," "naturalization," "cultural racism" and "minimization of racism" (p. 27). By subscribing to abstract tenets such as equal opportunity or individual choice, most people do not even recognize that they are

ignoring the institutionalized practices behind segregation and discrimination. Or whites regard results from discriminations as natural occurrences as well as showing cultural prejudices to minorities. In this sense, ideological frames and functions are dedicated to the maintenance of privileges for the powerful. Bonilla-Silva used a survey as well as in-depth interviews to collect information about how the new racial ideology works. He decoded the new racism and further explained its functions. He showed that people's understandings of discrimination vary according to social locations such as race. Furthermore, even African Americans' understandings are framed by the mainstream ideology (p. 264). While people differently navigate in social struggles, color-blindness gains hegemony throughout the society.

Participation in concrete practices in which ideology inheres saturates individuals with specific attitudes and actions. Thus, ideological effects encompass the realms of discourses and practice as well (DeLissovoy, 2008). In one sense, while school specifies its purposes and beliefs in language, it entails concrete social practices which require students to adopt specific ideas, attitudes, and behaviors. One of the most prevalent practices can be high-stakes testing. Students live up to norms like competition and hierarchy which are inherently defined in meritocratic practice. These attitudes and behaviors could do 'violence' to students' consciousness or unconsciousness (DeLissovoy & McLaren, 2003).

Thus, Chang (2011) criticizes meritocracy as an ideological falsehood that conceals the exclusion of the dominated by the dominant. Meritocracy justifies a hierarchical structure by ability (Young, 1971). Further, the term 'merit' is ambiguous in that "it is socially and politically constructed and there is no such a thing in itself evaluated by objective criterion" (Chang, 2011, p. 96). In this regard, meritocracy in education necessarily leads to the arbitrary reification to test scores. Given the inequality

of power between students, this injustice is normalized. Apple analyzed this as ideological control (2004) exercising "the dual effect of advantaging dominant groups in society and disadvantaging subordinate ones" (Apple, 1996, p. 92) and further supporting 'laissez-faire' educational issues like justice and equality: "Ideology always deals with legitimation, power, conflict, and a special style of argument" (Carlson, 2006, p. 96). The school not only contributes to unequal cultural distribution, but also produces specific ideologies or forms of consciousness to support specific groups. In school, as Apple argues, these messages are transmitted through a hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum involves attitude formation in response to teachers' practices or school policies.

The concept of ideology, however, implies more than the negative; it is not merely false or illusionary. Giroux (2001) evokes the complexity of ideology and its function, and suggests a dialectical implication for the concept of ideology as follows:

> Ideology refers to the production, consumption, and representation of ideas and behavior, which can either distort or illuminate the nature of reality. As a set of meanings and ideas, ideologies can be either coherent or contradictory; they can function within the spheres of both consciousness and unconsciousness; and, finally, they can exist at the level of critical discourse as well as within the sphere of taken-for-granted lived experience and practical behavior (p. 143).

This notion goes beyond Marx's concept of "false consciousness" and "domination" in that it implicates possibilities for alternative consciousness, resistance and social transformation. Leonardo (2003b) further elaborates the multifaceted functions of ideology as "negative," "necessary," and "positive," naming a "three-dimensional theory." Ideology combines complex dimensions of knowledge, beliefs, and unconsciousness with the power of social relations at play, and further functions as distortion of the reality or as a critical tool to explore the contradictions of practices.

This dialectical notion and function of ideology is useful in interpreting how

students have certain forms of understanding of educational achievement through high-stakes practices in schooling and how they compromise their views of reality with its contradictions. This is why the discussion of educational achievement should not end at the point of revealing educational disparities. The ideas and values, which conceal and at the same time buttress such a big gap, affect students' educational experiences and their beliefs. A discussion of ideology is necessary to understand educational discourses deeply embedded in school structures.

Hegemony

The previous section primarily describes the function of ideology in domination and the maintenance of social order, affecting consciousness and belief formations consciously or unconsciously in social practices. Gramsci (1971) illuminates consent or persuasion by ideology in the social formation. He believed that the role of politics and ideology is underestimated in orthodox Marxism, stating that "it is not ideology that changes the structures but vice versa" (p. 376). He insists on its dialectical relationships with the economic base as well as the autonomy of the superstructure. Regarding how the working class internalizes bourgeois ideology, he suggests that civil society voluntarily contributes to the dominant power or capitalistic relation of production. His analysis focuses more on consent than on overt domination. He divides the superstructure into two levels: civil and political society. To maintain the ruling power, besides coercive or physical forces by the political society, the ruling class obtains consent from civil society as a whole. He provides two principal conditions for politics: "as domination, and as intellectual and moral leadership" (p. 57). Hegemony is established when a social group gets the consent or compromise of the entire group through its supposedly ethical leadership. Hence, politics is linked to cultural processes through hegemony. Here,

hegemony is defined "as the ability of one class to articulate the interest of other social groups to its own" in a battle field of ideology (Mouffe, 1979, p. 183). Domination without hegemony is tantamount to dictatorship. As a result of cultural hegemonic processes, the world view or values of a certain group become the 'common sense' which the entire group identifies with. In other words, an ideological unity is created "between the bottom and the top, between the 'simple' and the intellectuals" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 329). Ideology is produced and spread throughout institutional structures entailing also social practices (Mouffe, 1979). Cultural processes at the level of the superstructure are important for obtaining hegemony, as well as analyzing its commonsensical understandings.

Ideology can be based upon common sense, which is contradictory in that it denotes "a complex combination of good and bad sense" (Giroux, 1983a, p. 23) in both the spheres of ideas and practical activities. Giroux (2001) takes into account that ideology is dialectical in relation to both discourses and practices. The good ideas confront contradictory experiences in practice, which can be the starting point to critically reflect on a taken-for- granted assumption. Common sense leaves room for counter-hegemony to articulate the contradictions of the system. Gramsci's "philosophy of praxis" is surely implicated in "a criticism of 'common sense,' basing itself initially, however, on common sense…renovating and making 'critical' an already existing activity" (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 330-331). He elaborates the dialectic between the intellectuals and masses, as well as between common sense and philosophy.

Common sense in education is articulated to affect students' understandings via everyday language. It expresses and justifies the needs, meanings, values, and purposes of schooling. Further, it is concretized in various educational practices. It is not necessary to instill it through coercion because it is inherent in the system. This common sense does

not encompass untold stories or invisible struggle. Ideas sometimes struggle with practical experiences. However, this practice provides the same point where counter-hegemony is constructed by critical analysis of education (Anyon, 2011). School is inherently reproductive and simultaneously productive of counter-narratives. The contradiction between the common sense view and these untold stories is a critical moment to rethink the meaning of common sense.

Apple (2004) applies the concept of hegemony to schooling. Students' consciousness is deeply "saturated" (p. 4) by a hegemonic process via naturalized common sense. He understands the concept of ideology, which embraces practices, knowledge, values, beliefs, and attitudes, in terms of the function of control and manipulation through cultural and political dimensions. Hegemony manipulates meanings of the commonsensical type in order to impact everyday experiences and consciousness. The dominant ideologies are universalized through schooling. Mainstream schooling, for example, promotes hegemonic attitudes about educational achievement through ideologies of "social mobility," "democracy," and "happiness" (Giroux, 1983b). These attitudes do not take into account structural effects or educational justice. When power is closely associated with "normalization," ideology becomes oppressive as it maintains cultural hegemony (DeLissovoy, 2008).

Educational practices like high-stakes testing in NCLB imply hegemonic discourses, which rely on the good sense to close educational gaps and improve student achievement, but they simultaneously mask political and economic realities (Carlson, 2006). For example, a liberal agenda like school choice and opportunity effectively obstructs privatization and competitive hierarchy of education. In addition, it seems to put schooling under increased bureaucratic control. The common sense about standards and efforts permeates students' everyday experiences, alienating their educational

achievement.

Class-Based Cultural Beliefs

The study of ideology and culture in education reveals what ideas, values, and beliefs are reproduced and how they are legitimated through certain practices. Schooling is a cultural practice embedded with meanings and beliefs and, at the same time, in which students are educated within their social locations. In discussions of students' experiences in schooling, class and culture are "intersectional" (Foley, 2010). They together provide a more detailed and less deterministic analysis of schooling. That is, many studies integrate cultural processes and class explanations together. This section relies upon empirical studies to explore how the analysis of class and culture adds to the complexities of educational experience and helps us interpret students' understandings of educational achievement.

Bourdieu (2000) provides an overarching theoretical framework focusing specifically on cultural processes differentiated according to social status. School systems play a critical role in social reproduction by legitimating the 'cultural capital' of the upper class. The school is the medium that maintains the unequal distribution of cultural capital, utilizing seemingly neutral and democratic sanctions. Ultimately cultural reproduction through family functions perpetuates the existing social order through schooling.

Based on the framework of Bourdieu, Lareau's (2003) cultural study, *Unequal Childhoods*, explores differing cultural beliefs regarding educational development among students from different class backgrounds. The focus of her study moves to "individuals' social structural location in shaping their daily lives" (p. 14). This result contradicts the idea that individual effort and talent results in outcomes and rewards, and that society is open and equal to all. Lareau found differences by class in terms of beliefs, values, and

skills in educating children and middle class skills are more advantageous by the mainstream institutions such as schools: "there are signs that some family cultural practices, notably those associated with concerted cultivation, give children advantages that other cultural practices do not" (p. 241). She compares the working-class and poor family practices to the middle-class family practices in terms of their beliefs about educational development and how they organize children's activities on the basis of their beliefs. The middle class's "concerted cultivation" through organized activities and participation is more successful in institutional education than the working class's "accomplishment of natural growth." Hence, she addresses why educational inequality is reinforced in cultural practices and clarifies the association between economic position and the cultural logic of education. This author does not deny differences within social classes but illuminates class-based cultural differences which are invisible and unrecognized in explaining educational experiences.

However, students have cultural autonomy within structural constraints. In a study of two groups of high school boys from working-class and poor families, McLeod (2008) focuses on individual autonomy at "the interface between the cultural and the structural" (p. 139) to understand social reproduction, using a micro level of analysis. The disadvantaged students still experienced class-based constraints during schooling. Nevertheless, they experienced schooling in different ways: "Although structural determinants shape the aspirations of the Hallway Hangers, the Brothers attest to the power of ideology to mold perceptions" (p. 150). He expounded on the Brothers' conformity to the mainstream belief:

> As the achievement ideology propagated in school implies, education is viewed as the remedy for the problem of social inequality; schooling makes the race for prestigious jobs and wealth an even one. The Brothers have a good deal of faith in the worth of schooling (p. 99).

The author elucidates the function of the cultural aspect in education to show that economic location is not always a determinant. He points out how ideology affects individuals' aspirations and expectations: "Ideology can cloud, distort, and conceal the mechanisms of social reproduction" (p. 150). In this study, the Brothers have aspirations for realizing their social mobility through schooling while the Hangers negatively and hopelessly view the school ideology.

The cultural process in education also mediates the achievement of students situated within social and racial construction. Ogbu (1987) categorizes two different positions such as involuntary and voluntary minorities, and explains the underachievement of the involuntary group as an oppositional culture against the dominant group. As a result, they refused to identify with dominant norms like academic success and achievement. Although this oppositional identity is formed within social, structural barriers, this notion is controversial in that the culture of minorities can be interpreted as a deficiency (Lundy, 2003; O'Connor, Horvat, & Lewis, 2006; Perry, 2003). Thus, this theory is easily used to blame Black culture for underperformance and consequently to reinforce the ideology of cultural deficiency and intellectual inferiority. The oppositional cultural framework fails to recognize the educational aspirations among Blacks, and also fails to recognize cultural differences between groups are not a cultural deficit (Perry, 2003). Lundy (2003) shows how Black students develop an achievement identity through cultural agency as a response to historical racial oppression. Carter (2003) demonstrated the mobility of cultural capital depending on goals of black students in different contexts. It was not true that black students do not have the use of dominant cultural capital, but that they strategically negotiate the usage of multiple cultural capitals through "cultural status positioning" (p.139) for racial identity on the one hand, and educational attainment on the other hand.

Regarding cultural socialization, Tyson (2003) questions how the notion of smartness and achievement constructed around white supremacy ideologically affects teaching and learning practices in predominantly black schools. Even black teachers and staff culturally socialize black students to conform to the dominant notion of achievement and behaviors, conveying unintended messages such as the negative formation of being black (p.338). These studies suggest that students' schooling experiences and achievement should be understood within cultural processes as social construction as well as cultural agency. Furthermore, more heterogeneous experiences of black students at the intersection of ethnicity, class, and gender are highlighted in research of black student achievement (O'Connor, et al., 2006).

Steele (1997, 2003) explores the psychological impact on achievement by sociocultural constructions such as race and gender. In a racialized and gendered context, social stigma on the ability of a specific group psychologically affects the identity of people within the group with regard to ability. Stereotypes constructed around social categories such as class, race, and gender significantly influence the achievement of the group. Steele empirically showed that structural and cultural threats function as obstacles to achievement identification and might result in poor achievement of specific groups. For example, black students' performance on the ability test was significantly affected by their racial stigma of 'intellectual inferiority' imposed on the black group. In addition, even girls whose usual math performance is high, showed lower achievement than their gender counterparts when they are aware of the gender stigma on girls' math ability. This theory showed the evidence of "something as sociological as stereotype threat can repress something as individual as intelligence" (Steele, 2003, p. 113). Thus, academic identity and success is partly associated with social and cultural constructions.

With regard to gender gaps in math and reading performance, Marks (2008)

shows that gender inequality in educational outcomes depends on gender socialization about educational expectations. Guiso and others concludes based on test results from 40 countries that gender gaps result from cultural inequality such as gender bias rather than biological differences (Guiso, Monte, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2008). At the intersection of race and gender, Lopez (2002) found the reason why women remain more optimistic of social mobility than men is due to their cumulative race-gender experiences. As a response to the "hegemonic view" about people of color and women, they affirmed upward social mobility through education.

Besides race and gender, stereotype and stigmatization goes with class, too. Efforts and ambition of students of low SES is stigmatized. Spencer and Castano (2007) account for class inequality in educational achievement, employing the concept of stereotype threat. Stereotypes pervasive in school culture play a part in the performance of low-SES students. Ainsworth and Wiggan (2006) suggest a theoretical alternative to "oppositional culture theory," focusing on different material and neighborhood contexts in which black students are situated. Resistance against the success ideology may result from structural conditions rather than racial differences. They focused on different neighborhoods which affect students' opportunity structure and access to social networks. Student outcomes are interpreted through both structural and sociocultural senses.

Willis (1977), through intensive field work, wrote a pioneering study examining students' cultural resistance to meaning-making based on schooling and the dominant class. According to Willis, white working-class male students have their own class-based identity and subculture. His work shows that social reproduction is mediated by certain cultural spheres. Identity and culture are produced around class backgrounds. He looks more deeply into students' struggle in school culture. He develops the concept of class culture to show that cultural processes better explain student performance than

intelligence. For example, the working-class students resist conforming to the official school culture, which is distant from their own and which devalues it. They choose to *differentiate* themselves from school. Economic structures are mediated by the cultural process in which individuals *penetrate* their social formations (MacLeod, 2008). They form their own class culture and resist against the middle-class culture.

However, class is not a single structure which forms cultures. Weis (2004) did a longitudinal ethnography following the lives of white working class high school students through adulthood to show how the macroeconomic and sociocultural contexts rearrange individual identities, and how they are continuously engaged between the sectors of class, race, and gender to reshape "a new white working class as a distinct class fraction" (p. 6). Individuals have active agency to make available the interactions between structure and culture, and make their own identity at the intersections of class, race, and gender along different paths. O'Connor (1999) also explores students' perceptions of opportunity structure in light of race, class, and gender through their voices and life stories. Low-income African American high-school students held narratives of opportunity structure permeated by their race, class, and gender. Race is more salient in their social identity than class and gender, although all these are intertwined (p. 138). They sometimes minimized and contextualized racial, gender, socioeconomic impacts on opportunities, while they were aware of racism, classism, and sexism.

Brantlinger (2007) analyzed narratives of youths and parents from different class backgrounds so as to point out the capitalistic and meritocratic nature of schooling. The information from her interviews shows that:

> Powerful people attribute their material and status advantages to their labors and talents. Correspondingly, they see Others' low status as due to their lesser aspirations and inferiority…They do not acknowledge obvious structural disparities in education or their own monopoly of high-status positions and

> white/class privilege (p. 242)… At least to a certain extent, poor parents and adolescents seemed to buy into the dominant class ideology (p. 258).

The capitalistic and meritocratic culture shapes students' identities based upon their class differences. Even affluent adolescents' educational experiences are commodified, exploited, and alienating. For example, they must live up to the expectations of their families, given their class status. Behind the compliance, their own feelings and educational purposes are disregarded. Also, Brantlinger revealed, at the intersection of class and culture, that race and gender as social formations affect class-cultural experiences.

In another study, emphasizing active agency and consciousness, Brantlinger (2003) argues that "social stratification is not a benign, chance occurrence but the result of people's intention and informed agency" (p. 2). She looks at the ways that middle class parents rationalize the advantages resulting from their class status. She illuminates the role that ideology plays in the process of domination and subordination. In her discussion of educational achievement, she claims that class advantage is invisible to middle class parents and youths, whose attitudes are shaped by notions of meritocracy and consequent deficit thinking. They continuously negotiate and participate in ideological strategies to maintain school structures benefiting them. Also, they are not interested in acknowledging that their decisions affect the educational experiences of lower class students. While they ostensibly value an orientation to what they call freedom and equality, from liberalism, their attitudes actually underscore "the dissonance between class epistemology and liberal identity" (p. 47). Using John Thomson's terms, Brantlinger terms this strategy 'symbolic construction' "shedding light on the ways ideology works to establish and sustain a liberal image and to disguise self-interested educational choices" (p. 47). For her, ideology is the primary analytical tool to look at the attitudes and justifications of school segregation. She concludes that they benefit from the conservative

neoliberal ideology and meritocracy.

The foregoing studies capture individual responses to two levels of culture: a broader view of culture or one limited to class culture. Students make sense of education within both broader cultural and historical contexts of a society as well as their own different contexts. The beliefs of a society in relation to the purpose of schooling are inextricably embedded with the domain of culture and ideology. In this way, the ideological context is clouded with particular educational beliefs about educational opportunity.

For instance, McQuillan (1998) conducted an ethnographic study in an urban high school which had predominantly low-income students of color, in order to expose cultural beliefs regarding educational opportunity. Before he began this ethnographic study, he viewed schools as the ladder for social mobility and self-fulfillment with full educational opportunities. Eventually, he came to conclude that these cultural values undermine how students actually experience schooling. Certain cultural values that people, including students, accept as natural and normal benefit some students while disadvantaging others. Students at Russell High experience low teacher expectations, a less demanding curriculum, and strong discipline policies. Dropout and failure rates are high.

Nonetheless, equality of educational opportunity is not questioned in schools. On the contrary, educational opportunity is taken for granted, with students' interests and needs considered as individual matters, "promoting a view of education that located success (and implicitly failure) with individuals while downplaying relevant systemic factors" (p. 179). He refers to this phenomenon as "a cultural blind spot," where "culture can hide as well as highlight" (p. 16). Certain beliefs and values prevail through schooling. Culture effectively works to obscure structural constraints. Therefore, in his view, understandings of educational opportunity require awareness of structure. The

discussion of culture and class should be not exclusive but complementary. With regard to educational opportunity, class distinctions profoundly impact students' everyday experiences. Van Galen (2007) argues that:

> While the academy is relatively silent about class, public discourse about the purposes of schooling actively denies its existence. As state and federal policy resonates with promises of opportunity if only individuals learn more, neither students nor their teachers have access to alternative interpretive lenses for explaining and navigating the constraints of their shared institutional lives (p. 2).

The social structure, including class, impacts the issue of educational opportunity. Educational outcomes affected by structures should be the center of the issue of equal opportunity. As the focus is on individuals' efforts and on the general opportunity for schooling, structural effects disappear in the discussion of educational achievement. Many studies show the effect of social location on the educational disparities between groups.

Fine (1991) questions ideologies of equal opportunity in terms of unequal outcomes. She conducted a critical ethnography focusing on narratives of minority, low-income students in a comprehensive high school. Even though institutional defects - such as very frequent disciplinary actions and teacher turn over - clearly did not support students' needs and interests, low test scores and high dropout rates were solely attributed to students. While students suffer from unequal outcomes derived from economic disadvantages, schooling still is taken without question as representative of equality and social mobility. She reveals how ideologies mask unequal outcomes. For example, one of them is the ideology of universal access which justifies "the explicit privileging of educational access over outcomes as the measure of educational justice" (p. 181). "Ideological fetishes" persisting through schooling contribute to the reproduction of social inequality. These beliefs framing schooling need to be investigated further.

CONCLUSION: A REPRESENTATION OF THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Regarding its purpose, the economic reproduction resulting from schooling cannot be fully explained by structural accounts. Class relations explain educational inequalities of a society in large part. However, this approach is likely to omit various individual stories constructed within social and cultural contexts. Education in a larger and schooling in a smaller context carries the underlying belief system of a society. For the most part, it talks about educational achievement and equal opportunity reflecting the cultural background. In particular, educational policy at times covertly and at other times overtly controls beliefs about what educational achievement should be.

This dissertation focuses on students' experiences in order to interpret educational phenomena at the intersection of structure and culture. In particular, it explores how the norms imposed by high-stakes testing affect students' understandings according to their different social locations. In this process, the notions of ideology and hegemony provide a better understanding of how high-stakes testing affects practices at all educational levels. Student attitudes vis-à-vis their own educational purposes, cultural beliefs, class-different experiences, and their ideas about achievement ideology and equal opportunity provide the primary interpretive constructs.

This study draws upon a variety of critical and cultural theories in order to understand how students experience high-stakes testing. The theoretical framework posits a study within coherent foundations throughout the process of problem statement to data analysis. Rich theoretical and empirical literature gives implications for this structural work. This section presents how the study's framework is organized, using a graphic presentation (Figure1), to better elucidate the theoretical framework.

The interpretation of educational achievement through schooling must, of

necessity, be flexible and should not be confined merely to prevailing notions of excellence or attainment as a function of test-taking skills (Noddings, 2006, 2007). However, high-stakes testing frequently has become the determinant of curriculum development and learning experiences (Au, 2009). By disregarding its instructional role for enhancing learning (Jones, 2001), high-stakes testing mediates and reinforces the structure of unequal opportunity (Anyon, 2011; Lipman, 2004). In addition to its structural effects, it supports political, economic, and cultural interests (Leistyna, 2007; Leonardo, 2007). Its ideological representation is apparently contradictory in that high-stakes testing appears individualistic despite the fact that it is strongly affected by structural effects. It works ideologically but presents itself as neutrality.

In a neoliberal and capitalistic context, high-stakes testing promotes a meritocratic ideal with its resultant inequalities, and ignores what should be the broader, equalizing aim of education in a democratic society (Apple, 2006; Au, 2011; MacLeod, 2008). Furthermore, it spreads ideas of the supremacy or deficiency of particular groups (Leonardo, 2007; McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001). Thus, high-stakes testing itself becomes a significant justification of the status quo.

Therefore, high-stakes testing needs to be investigated taking into account structure and the culture, examining the politics of ideology and hegemony. Cultural theorists argue that the analysis of educational practices requires more attention to cultural aspects and ideological process (Gramsci, 1971; Leonardo, 2010a; Mouffe, 1979). This does not mean that culture explains better than structure does. Instead, it provides alternatives for more complex ways of thinking about educational practices (Cho, 2010; deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). Taking culture into account makes overly deterministic explanations less likely.

In Figure1, the horizontal axis represents the nature of fluid analysis between

structure and culture in education. Reproduction theorists have provided these models from the micro level of processes of education (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999). In addition to schooling in larger sociocultural and economic contexts, the identification and agency of individuals that make sense of schooling is included in these interpretations (Giroux, 2001). Lived experiences and voices enable researchers to interpret educational practices in a more concrete and necessarily complex way. This is not to say that the macro level should not be taken into account. Each level of analysis should be understood in relation to the other. Weis and Fine (2005) suggest "compositional studies" looking at the relations of the macro settings and micro lives in addition to complex relations between groups and across contexts.

The vertical axis in the Figure1 visualizes the relational characteristics of both micro and macro levels of analysis. Viewed from the upper part, the research focuses primarily on individuals' lived experiences within economic, political, and cultural contexts. The lower part shows in a graphic format the larger and broader contexts including economic relations and ideological formations.

The two axes show the intersectional, cross-relational, and complex nature of educational practices. For the purpose of clarifying these relationships, the two lines lead to a quadrant. Because it does not make sense that each section is clearly divided from the others, the line is assumed to be permeable. The processes within which high-stakes testing influences students' understandings of educational achievement are analyzed through a quadrant in which high-stakes testing functions.

In the 'cultural' and 'micro' levels of the first quadrant, the focus is on students' everyday experiences in relation to their cultural representations and ideological identifications. As an example, MacLeod's (2008) research describes students' different identification with the schools' achievement ideology and authority. This study attempts

to explain "how … two groups from the same social location [can] embody two distinctly different cultural orientations" (p. 22). The 'structural' and 'micro' levels of the second quadrant represent students that have different social and economic positions. According to their class status, they are afforded different educational opportunities. Class status still makes a difference (Anyon, 2011; Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2003). The 'structural' and 'macro' levels of the third quadrant visualize the structures of a society within a broader context. The analysis from the 'cultural' and 'macro' level of the fourth quadrant reveals where high-stakes testing policies are politically and culturally grounded. Numerous critiques of accountability policies are typical of studies in the fourth quadrant. This study assumes that students' schooling experiences under high-stakes testing pass through this quadrant, and that high-stakes testing strongly affects educational achievement. Students' voices and stories allow us to understand how high-stakes testing operates in making sense of educational achievement.

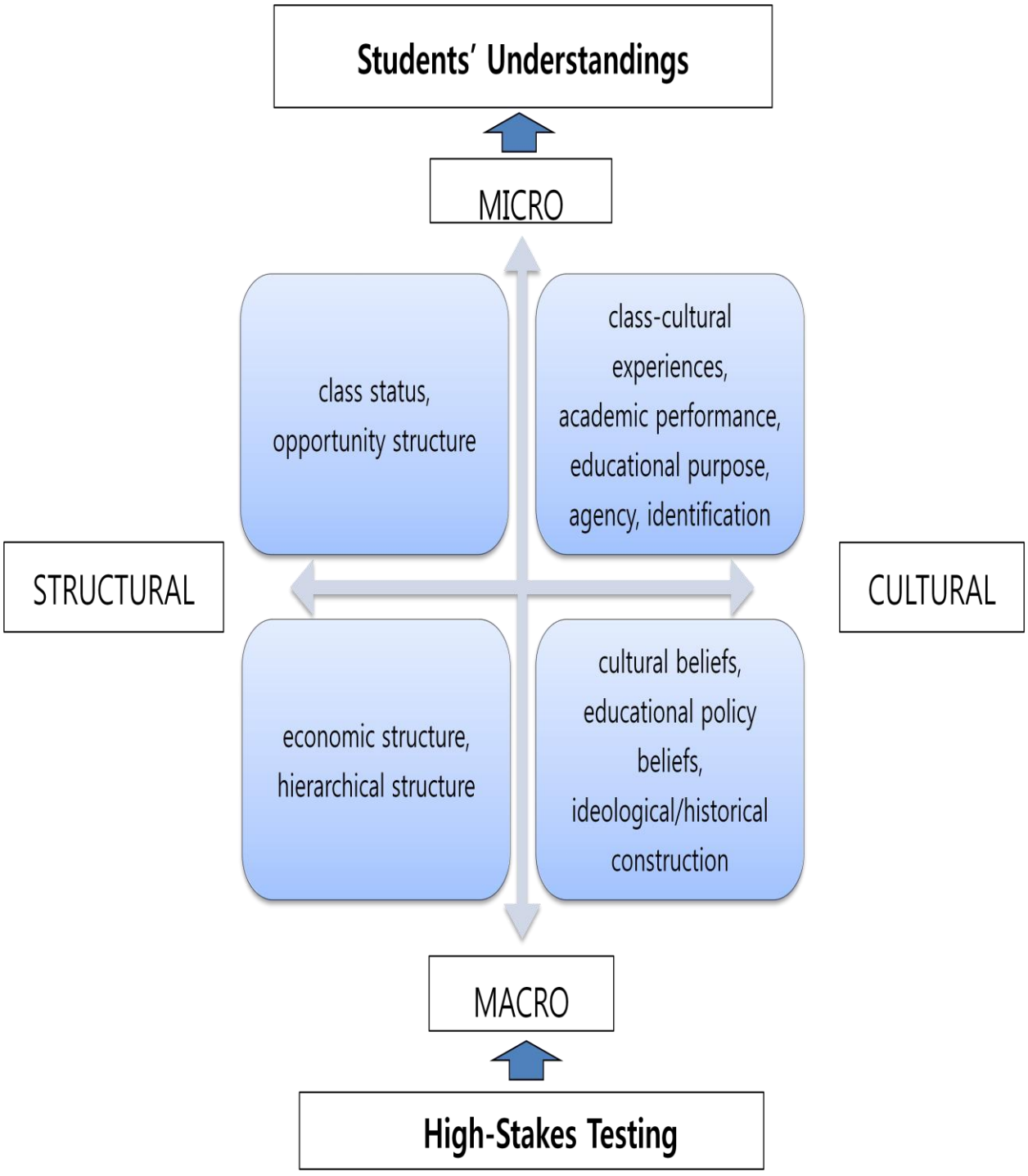
Students' Understandings
MICRO
class status, opportunity structure
class-cultural experiences, academic performance, educational purpose, agency, identification
STRUCTURAL
CULTURAL
economic structure, hierarchical structure
cultural beliefs, educational policy beliefs, ideological/historical construction
MACRO
High-Stakes Testing

Figure 1.

Chapter 3: Methodology

When I volunteered at a Korean school in the U.S., I had a chance to talk with a few high-school students who had also volunteered as assistants. Among them were some students who had studied abroad from middle school or high school levels, leaving their family behind in Korea. I talked to a high-school girl about what had brought her here. She said, "As you know, my parents and I wanted to avoid a high-stakes educational system in Korea. I was not a good performer and that system would have put me at disadvantage. It is too competitive and unfair." Then I asked her about the high-stakes testing in America. She replied, "Well, to some extent, it is necessary to filter some students according to their ability for those who really want to study in a competitive society." As a point of reference, she performs well here. I felt a big inconsistency in her statements but soon recognized she was strongly involved in the achievement ideology. When she was benefiting from a system, she remained unaware of both privileges and contradictions inherent in the system.

This is just a fraction of knowing what is involved in high-stakes testing. Our conversation stirred my curiosity about how students have certain ideological understandings within a high-stakes testing environment and how I might collect more pieces from students' lived experiences. In terms of educational equality, this study prefers to look not at who performs better than whom under high-stakes testing, as well as the consequences, but at how this system links structures to individuals' experiences and how their thinking evolves.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to reveal students' understandings and experiences of educational achievement in relation to equal opportunity, educational

purposes and needs, and how these understandings and experiences are embedded in the various discourses associated with high-stakes testing environments. I argue that high-stakes testing is a hegemonic practice affecting students' everyday educational experiences throughout their schooling. It both covertly and overtly defines the meaning of achievement in education. Moreover, students may hold different views within social structure and culture. In this study, I attempt to respond to the following questions:

1. How do students understand educational achievement, educational purpose, and educational opportunity in a high-stakes testing environment?
2. How do their understandings differ according to their class backgrounds and levels of academic performance?

To explore these questions, I conducted a qualitative case study that provides detailed and in-depth understandings via the informants' voices. This chapter draws up the conceptual framework on the basis of theories and theoretical and empirical literature, as described in the previous chapter. High-stakes testing is understood in relation to its social, economic, and cultural settings. In particular, its ideological influences on students' understandings in the cultural process are the focus. Students' perceptions of educational achievement were analyzed in relation to opportunity structure, educational purposes, and the achievement ideology. In the section regarding the research paradigm wherein the research interest is grounded and initiated, the discussions of epistemology, ontology, and methodology address how the researcher comes to this study and how this research is organized. Then, the methodological strength and coherence of a qualitative case study, which this study relies on, is laid out. Researcher positionality mentions the relations between the researched and the researcher, as well as personal positions. The last section points out the limitations of this study.

RESEARCH PARADIGM

Fundamental issues of epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology logically lead to certain types of research paradigms and approaches, and researcher positioning. That is, "[the researcher's] particular way of seeing the world" (Coe, 2012, p. 6). Assumptions about reality and the ways to get at it reveal where and how the researcher is consistently grounded. Koro-Ljungberg et al. (Koro-Ljungberg, et al., 2009) suggested multiple reasons for attending to these issues in research: "epistemological awareness is an important and informative part of the transparent research process [and] assist[s] authors in selecting methods that instantiate and support their knowledge building, as well as choosing a theoretical perspective" (p. 687). Thus, the research paradigm, "as basic belief systems based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions," (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 200) leads researchers to the appropriate organization of their work in light of what they want to know, why they want to know it, and how it can be known. Crotty (1998) highlights the importance of the research perspective coherently grounded in epistemological and ontological assumptions. Further, he points out that some research fails to mention its epistemologies and that some researchers do research in an inconsistent manner despite having apparently undertaken an epistemology.

Ontology is concerned with how the assumptions that the researcher makes about the world, truth, and reality and epistemology show how she understands the world and builds knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1998). Epistemology as "the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology" (Crotty, 1998, p. 3) can be categorized into different theories according to philosophers; and furthermore, categories are often arbitrary and changeable in some respect and

certainly open to debate (Koro-Ljungberg, et al., 2009; Sipe & Constable, 1996). Nevertheless, it is apparent that a specific research paradigm implies a specific epistemology and ontology. As Crotty (1998) has contended: "each theoretical perspective embodies a certain way of understanding *what is* (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding *what it means to know* (epistemology)" (p. 10). A researcher should be careful not to identify the term epistemology with the term ontology. Yet, a discussion of epistemology begins with the following question, "*how we know what we know*" (p. 8); this question already assumes the existence of both the knower and the known. Crotty argues that "ontological issues and epistemological issues tend to emerge together" (p. 10).

The frequent usage of either qualitative or quantitative research falls in the level of methods: "If it suits their purposes, any of the theoretical perspectives could make use of any of the methodologies, and any of the methodologies could make use of any of the methods" (Crotty, 1998, p. 12). Guba and Lincoln (1998) also state that "both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm" (p. 195). Qualitative research is a methodological response to non-measurable arenas as well as an acknowledgement of "strong counterpressures against quantification" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 197). This methodology draws attention to interests and curiosities being overlooked or marginalized in mainstream research. In addition, qualitative research allows researchers to understand variations within even one group. Generalized average value (associated with quantitative research) tends to "mask great differences among participants" (Patton, 1990, p. 15). In addition, qualitative methods can provide in-depth understandings from personal experiences and feelings.

This dissertation is epistemologically based on the broader constructionism which recognizes the impossibility of complete separation between the subject and the object.

The "interdependence of subject and world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 45) is indispensable to making meanings. Here, meanings imply more than just facts. As opposed to positivism, which considers only facts and excludes values, with regard to construction of realities, facts and values are not definitely distinct from one another. This orientation expands the human inquiry into more diverse contexts and various realms. The research paradigm of this study is based on interpretivism, and more specifically critical theory according to Guba and Lincoln's (1998) classifications. Critical theory accepts multiple forms of knowledge and multiple ways of interpretations as well (Kincheloe, 2004; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Our social, political, economic, and cultural situations affect our understanding of the world, that is, our construction of reality. Knowledge is socially constructed in historical, cultural, and social context. In other words, knowledge is contingent on social and cultural practices. Critical theory, however, does not simply confirm this situated knowledge. Rather, it pays attention to how knowledge constructions or realities are affected by power relations in social and political contexts and challenges it.

Using terminology of critical theory, this study draws on implications from critical theory as a research paradigm according to Guba and Lincoln's (1998) classifications. They specify that its aims are to achieve the critique, transformation, and ultimately emancipation. Methodologically, it is dialogic and dialectical: "the transactional nature of inquiry requires a dialogue between the investigator and the subjects of the inquiry" (Guba & Lincoln, 1998, p. 206). The rich understanding of critical theory as a qualitative research are explored by Kincheloe and McLaren (2005). They provided the basic assumptions:

> That all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; that facts can never be isolated from the domain of values

> or removed from some form of ideological inscription…;that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged over others…the oppression that characterizes contemporary societies is most forcefully reproduced when subordinates accept their social status as natural, necessary, or inevitable (p. 304).

Critical theory reveals the relation of domination/oppression in relation to structures and ideologies in the multiple formations of class, race, and gender. Gramsci's work is powerful in that it attempted to uncover hegemony and its related power as being taken for granted.

Moreover, the critical theorist often "combines both macro and micro analyses of social phenomena" and "believe[s] that inherent in social organizations are contradictions" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999, p. 27). This study attempts to reveal, through students' voices and lived experiences, the contradictions and consequences of high-stakes testing. The focus is on the relationship to educational achievement and the different cultural experiences and ideological identifications. The critical theory contributes to demystifying educational hegemony which is taken for granted and alienates students' learning processes. This study assumes that high-stakes testing holds specific ideological notions about ability, learning, intelligence, and equality. High-stakes testing entails a cultural context as well as the educational structure.

QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

Qualitative research typically deals with small sample sizes and with experiences and variations that cannot be generalized by a grand theory (Glesne, 2011). It yields complex and detailed information that cannot be gathered by the standardized measurement tool. Qualitative research acknowledges that "there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality" (Merriam, 2002, pp. 4-5). Epistemologically different interests lead to different methodologies. As Stake (1995) notes, it is a matter of

emphasis. Such issues as the research purpose, the role of the researcher, the measurement tool, control issues, data type, and data analysis affects the decision about what methodology to use. The researcher does not measure the informants' experiences by external and objective instruments, but interprets them through his/her frameworks. Thus, qualitative research is inevitably value-laden, and it argues that "there are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of-and between-the observer and the observed" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). The researcher becomes a part of the study, which is contingent on the informant. A case study approach methodologically is suitable for this dissertation about high-stakes testing because it permits a better interpretation of students' understandings situated within particular contexts. A case study is employed here to help the researcher interact with information from specific cases and to gather complex experiences rather than the overall general ideas of high-school students.

The case study aims at understanding specific cases in terms of issues, interests, or concerns to investigate. Even if a case study is categorized as one of qualitative inquiry designs (Creswell, 2007), it generally does not refer to specific methods of data collection or analytical tools (Merriam, 1998). Thus, as Stake (1994) states, a "case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied" (p. 236). Since a case study per se does not designate a particular way of carrying out investigations (Gillham, 2001; Merriam, 1998), this dissertation combines the case study with qualitative methods. It is more about 'cases' with rich and complex information.

The case study is interested in exploring a specific case for thick understandings. Thus, whether it is about issues or persons, a case study results in intensive and in-depth explanations (Yin, 2009). It does not pursue generalization, which is important in scientific positivistic methods. The purpose of case study is "particularization" (Stake,

1995, p. 8), that is, detailed stories occurring within specific contexts. A case study helps a researcher interpret and understand certain cases on the basis of various data without attempting to find ideas applicable from case to case or from sample to population.

The goal of this study is not to verify a theory using a formula. On the contrary, it produces and extends implications of theories using data from cases. Yin (2009) calls this process "analytic generalization": "under these circumstances, the mode of generalization is *analytic* generalization, in which a previously developed theory is used as a template with which to compare the empirical results of the case study" (p. 38). The results and findings obtained from particularizing a case cannot be generalized but contribute to "providing strong support for the theory" (p. 44). Thus this study attempts to expand implications of critical theories and cultural theories. A qualitative case study does not tell a grand single story. Instead, various detailed stories from real situations ground theories in actual lived experiences.

We learn from a case when "the readers come to know some things told, as if he or she had experienced them" (Stake, 1994, p. 240). For this goal, a case study should show in-depth descriptions and a holistic understanding of the research questions. Choosing an appropriate case is related to coming up with the proper research questions to address. A case study pays a primary attention to 'how' or 'why' questions (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). In particular, research questions are grounded in the disciplinary orientations of the researcher (Merriam, 1998, 2009). This study is oriented with critical theories and qualitative research to show what individuals experience under the pressures of high-stakes testing, and how.

Yin (2009) defines the case study as something that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). On the

other hand, Stake (1995) holds that "the case is a specific, a complex, functioning thing [and that] the case is an integrated system" (p. 2). Another useful term for understanding of the case study conceptualizes it as 'a bounded system' which is a term Louis Smith uses to define the case. Then a case study explores in-depth and complex stories of a bounded system in a real life context. These cases tend to refer to people or programs rather than processes or phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). For example, in educational case studies, a teacher, a student, a school, or an intervention program can be a case.

The research interest of this study is centered on how high school students construct their understandings of educational achievement through schooling within a high-stakes testing system. It is also concerned with how they experience it differently according to their academic performance and class status. A qualitative case study methodology is suitable for understanding students' perceptions and experiences within a specific context.

According to Stake's (1995) typology, my study is more instrumental than intrinsic. The intrinsic study tells more about the case itself while the instrumental study attends to the issues and concerns of the case. Issues about how high-stakes testing works in cultural processes, which are constructed out of my personal experience and academic orientation, led to my choosing to perform a case study. Another interest will be how the data from cases support my theoretical frameworks. My interests in subjects situated within real contexts, not in measurement tools, led me to qualitative research. Context-specific interpretations of the Korean high-stakes system make the critical theory more realistic and practicable. The purpose is to learn from students' lived experiences and their voices.

This study is in fact a "multicase study" (Stake, 2005) where each case plays out in a different context. Various realities across contexts provide a more comprehensive

understanding about students' experiences. In my study, students bring different stories to the classroom, embedded in a complex web of race, class, gender, and culture. Stake argues that, "a multicase study starts with recognizing what concept or idea binds the cases together" (p. 23). A multiple-case study allows for expanding of theories, in that "the evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust" (Yin, 2009, p. 53).

Fine and Weis (2005) suggests the use of "compositional studies" analyzing information across contexts and relations. They discovered that 'class' does not solely explain students' educational experiences situated within cultural, social, historical, and political settings. Weis (2004) showed that identity formation, particularly of white working-class men in a specific region can be interpreted in relation to other bordering groups, such as women, African Americans, and other racial groups, and further, in relation to broader economic and political contexts. "Deep theorizing and deep analysis are required to join these seemingly separate and isolated groups and to link them institutionally and ideologically" (Fine & Weis, 2005, p. 66) because their experiences are not homogeneous across contexts.

In terms of my own study, students' experiences and understandings require contextual and relational interpretations that include their class status, political and economic context, and academic performance. It is not only because their lives are constructed around various axes, but also all the axes are mutually influential. The investigations of cross-cases and cross-contexts serve this purpose.

Case Settings

A case study helps us learn from a case and add meaningful knowledge through investigations of the case itself. To achieve methodological rigor and research goals, case

selection is significant. Case selection encompasses more than just sampling, for it is not concerned with making statistical generalizations from sample to population (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). According to Stake (1995), "case study is not sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case…The first criterion should be to maximize what we can learn" (p. 4). Despite the fact that we are studying a small sample, "the case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 40). It denotes complex interactions with social contexts. The strategy of case selection is nonprobability sampling (Merriam, 2009). Because a sample in a case study does not represent an entire population, random or probable sampling is replaced with purposeful sampling (Patton, 1990). Instead of attempting to generalize, a case study explores a research problem by choosing information-rich cases (p.169). Also, in order to understand informants' experiences in complex realities, this research aims to "gather contradictory or overlapping perceptions and nuanced understandings that different individuals hold" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 67). Thus, purposeful sampling strategy is tied to this study.

This study draws on cases from three "ordinary and general" public high schools located in one metropolitan city in Korea. By ordinary and general, I mean that they are not "specially-purposed schools" geared towards science, foreign language, sports, arts and music, or vocation. Specially-purposed schools have the leeway of selecting students in earlier decisions. Especially, these schools are mostly private and apply highly competitive student selection procedures based primarily on GPA, principal recommendations, and aptitude. Starting in 2010, in compliance with the extension of the policy of school choice (Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, retrieved from www.sen.go.kr), "autonomous private high schools" select higher achieving students in

the earlier decision period than ordinary and general schools. These schools have more freedom in organizing curriculum and receive more tuition than general high schools. In 2011, of 314 high schools in this city, about two thirds were general high schools. In Korea, whether it is private or public, general high schools are funded by the government.

Most students attending general high schools intend to go on to higher education. Among the nearly 80,000 graduates in 2011 from ordinary and general high schools in this city, 92 % originally hoped to continue with higher education and 56% ended up actually attending college (Center for Education Statistics, Korea Education Development Institute, retrieved from http://www.statistics.sen.go.kr). This does not mean that the rest of the students did not attempt to go to college. It simply means that they failed to qualify for entrance. This phenomenon tells us that, in Korea, educational passion for higher education is high but access is highly competitive.

On a national level, Korea has about 650,000 students in each high school grade. The city where this case study was done makes up over one sixth of that population (The 2011 Census, Statistics Korea, retrieved from http://www.kosis.kr). Nationally, the nearly 700,000 students, including some high school graduates, applied to take the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT) in 2011 (Korea Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation, retrieved from http://www.kice.re.kr). Only high school seniors and graduates are eligible to take the CSAT.

City statistics and census data were useful in finding appropriate districts with contrasting schools. I located a few schools from each district and gathered data about the number of students, the free lunch rate, academic performance, and graduation information. In terms of income, I used the district statistics because we had no official information about students' family income except for the free lunch rate and financial aid for high school tuition. As a result, I found two districts for comparisons and further

collected three public schools located in these districts in order to have the participants who have comparable economic backgrounds and academic levels. Three schools with pseudonyms are Ara High (a male school), Ara Girls High (a female school), and Maru High (a coeducational school). These schools were chosen because they are all public general high schools and are comparable in terms of school culture, economic status, and student achievement. The official school information website (www.schoolinfo.go.kr) does not include the economic background of students, so it is not possible to identify cases focusing on economic contexts. The fiscal evidence of each district informed from city statistics and census data helped find the comparable districts. Within each district, schools were sorted by a criterion of public and general high schools. Access to students was also taken into consideration.

Ara High and Ara Girls High in the Park District are distinguished from Maru High in the River District in terms of their overall achievement level, economic backgrounds of students, and reputations. Ara High and Ara Girls High are known for their educational advancement and economic prosperity of students. These schools have long owned the best reputation nationwide based on their high performance and the elite alumni they turn out. Currently, however, many specially-purposed schools and autonomous private schools are contending for that title. Maru High is viewed as a low-performing school in a financially disadvantaged neighborhood.

Ara High and Ara Girls High are located in one of the city's wealthiest districts (named as the Park District), which is one of five special districts in education among 25 districts, and Maru High is in one of the lower socioeconomic districts (named as the River District). The fiscal self-sufficiency rate (the percent of revenue over budget) for each district is 80.5% and 30.7%, respectively, in comparison with 46% as the average across all districts. The fiscal revenue rate which meets the fiscal demands is, respectively,

173% and 49.8% in 2012 (Seoul Statistics, retrieved from http://www.stat.seoul.go.kr).

		Ara High			Ara Girls High			Maru High		
Total Student Number		1,812			1,768			1,112		
Free Lunch		116 (6.4%)			150 (8.4%)			337(30.3%)		
Student/Teacher Ratio		19.9			20.3			17.9		
Drop-out and Expel rate		3.2%			2.1%			2.9%		
Funded Money from Parents and Community in 2011		₩871,119,715 ($791,927)			₩134,140,885 ($121,946)			₩14,120,750 ($12,837)		
2011 NAEA	%	Above Average	Basic	Below Basic	Above Average	Basic	Below Basic	Above Average	Basic	Below Basic
	Korea	80.5	14.4	5.1	90.6	7.2	2.2	58.6	30.9	10.5
	Math	84.3	11.1	4.6	84.7	11	4.3	57.5	30.7	11.8
	English	86.9	9.7	3.4	95.9	3.1	1	63.8	24.4	11.8
After Graduation (2012)	Graduates	603			583			408		
	4-Year-University	210			334			118		
	College	34			42			87		
	Abroad	4			14			1		
	Employed	1			0			0		
	Other	354			193			202		

Table 1: School Information
(Retrieved from http://www.schoolinfo.go.kr)

In this city in 2011, 23 % of all students from elementary to high school do not get private tutoring. Nationally, of the students ranked in the top 10 % in school performance, 15.4% received no private tutoring. In comparison, of those in the lower 20 % performance level, more than half went without private tutoring. Moreover, about 65% of students from households with a monthly income below ₩1,000,000 ($909, $1=₩1,100) took no private lessons; that figure for students from households having a monthly income above ₩7,000,000 ($6,363) was 14.7% (The 2011 Census, Statistics Korea, retrieved from http://www.kosis.kr).

According to results from the 2011 National Assessment of Educational Achievement (NAEA), out of 310 high schools in this city, Ara High ranked 92nd with an 83.9% above average proficiency; Ara Girls High ranked 44th with a 90.2%; Maru High ranked High 241st with a 60% .

Table 1 presents information regarding these schools as released by the school district. An unusually high number of Ara High graduates categorized as 'other' in graduation information includes retakers who prepare for admission to the higher ranking universities for the next year. Taking the CSAT to get into top-ranked universities over a two or three year period is a very common practice in Korea. Some of Maru High graduates categorized as 'other' also try to take the CSAT again while some of them choose military recruitment which is compulsory for men in Korea as well as find a job.

Participants

Cases in this study consist of 15 juniors who have experienced high-stakes testing throughout their school careers. Since this study focuses on how students from different backgrounds make sense of educational experiences in a specific high-stakes testing environment, cases were selected in light of three criteria: gender, academic performance, and class status. After I selected three appropriate public high schools, I contacted teachers and principals to inquire about recruiting students and then one of teachers in each school helped post up a notice on the board. The poster says that this study needs junior students who are interested in sharing their educational experience and ideas under high-stakes testing with a Korean researcher who has been studying abroad. In addition, criteria were specified in terms of gender, performance, and social class: boys or girls, the top 20 percent or the bottom 30 percent performance level, and above the middle class or the lower class. At Ara Girls High and Ara High, the participant selection targeted the

higher class, while at Maru High, it aims for the lower class, which is accordingly specified in each poster. The participants clarified to the teacher individually their motivation for participation. After two participants of each criterion were collected, the teacher stopped recruiting and gave me the participant information. Since, among the participants, their identity is confidential to each other and the participants who have different criteria were voluntarily drawn, this case selection may have influenced to gather the rich and trustworthy interview data which include varying experiences and the overlapping ideas across participants in addition to nuanced understandings each participant hold. This study aims to reveal class-based experiences and different understandings of students at the bottom (e.g. MacLeod, 2008) as well as those of high achievers at the top (e.g. Brantlinger, 2007) when students are situated in a high-stakes testing environment.

	Higher Class		Lower Class	
	Ara Girls High	Ara High	Maru High girls	Maru High boys
High Achiever	2	2	3	2
Low Achiever	2	2	1	1
Teacher	1		1	
Parent	1		1	

Table 2. Participants

Regarding class criteria, this study refers to Korean Office of Statistics show in Table 3. Ara High and Ara Girls High students are from higher-income families (the base line of the top 30 percent). Maru High students are supposed to be from lower-income families (the base line of the bottom 40 percent). This selection criterion, however, was loosely applied. Furthermore, it depends on students' personal identification of economic

background, parents' occupation, and place of residence. In other words, class division in this study can be understood as a relative term.

	Monthly household income ($1 = ₩1,100)
The average of the top 10 %	$8,168
The average of the top 30%	$6,072
The base line of the top 30%	$4,597
The average of the all	$3,583
The base line of the bottom 40%	$2,636
The average of the bottom 30%	$1,488

Table 3. Income Criteria
(The monthly household income with more than two people in the second quarter of 2012, Korean Office of Statistics, retrieved from http://www.kosis.kr)

The government offers, for example, wide ranging boundary of the "middle class" including 50% to 150 % of the median income of households in 2011 (www.kosis.kr). According to this criterion, households from the monthly income $1,590 through $4,772 are labeled under the middle class. It does not, however, make sense that the household earning $1,590 falls within the middle class range because it almost represents the average of the bottom 20% of that year (Y.-Y. Park, 2013, Feb. 8). At the actual interview, all students from Ara High claimed their economic status above the middle class, two students from Maru High claimed their status around or below the middle class, and others from Maru High categorized their status as the lower class.

Data Collection

The primary data sources of this study are interviews and the life stories of students. Interviews provide a good opportunity to interact with informants. Mears (2012)

contends that a researcher can cross the boundary between the researcher and the respondent through in-depth interviews. The purpose of the research should always guide the interview process, and the interview connects the purpose of the research to information-rich specific cases. In addition, this process is "a collaborative effort" to construct meaningful knowledge and reflection (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Through the interview process, the researcher adds the participant's voice to understandings of educational practices that would otherwise be silent. This process provides a meaningful reflection for the respondent and a deepened understanding of social realities for the researcher as well. Furthermore, Fontana and Frey clarify that "interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but rather active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated, contextually based results" (p. 698). Interview questions per se imply pre-interpretations (Ritchie, 2003). The data from interviews cannot be objective or neutral knowledge for explaining people's realities in education.

I implemented two interview sessions focusing on depth, building rapport, elaboration of the prior interview (Glesne, 2011). Each session lasted approximately one hour, including warming up. Interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to better explore students' experiences and thinking. Glesne refers to Patton's notion that questions about experiences provide an ideal moment for interviewees to talk comfortably. As Glesne suggests that "questions [should be] anchored in the respondents' cultural reality" (p. 110), interview questions need to be prepared with consideration of the particular contexts where participants are. Thus, interview questions for this study had been revised after pilot interviews with two high school students in a city of Korea. Those preliminary interviews had been conducted in order to revise and establish suitable questions for Korean high school students. During this process, I found out that questions needed to be elaborated so that students would be able to express their ideas easily and comfortably.

The interview protocol is found in the appendix.

Based on my own educational experience in Korea, I am aware that students hesitate to express their own thinking in public. I as a student was trained to answer teachers' questions only when I was confident that the answer was correct. Rather than having their own thinking and discussions with teachers, students throughout schooling had a tendency to seek the shortcut and efficient answers that they believe are expected. This tendency raised another potential concern for me. If students try to say what the researcher wants to hear or if the researcher tries to hear what s/he wants to hear, the study would be biased and distorted. The reflexivity principle requires an ongoing critical reflection on the research procedure (Glesne, 2011; Yin, 2009). Thus, I did not entirely expose my research interests and questions to students and tried not to lead interviews. Moreover, the interview process should also be organized in a way that invites students to reflect on their educational meanings (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Merriam, 2009). This research should provide a meaningful space for engaging students in educational conversations. Unlike my worries, however, students were very active in talking about their experiences and sharing stories under high-stakes testing.

The second session was arranged for listening to students' life stories in relation to high-stakes testing: for example, when they were aware of testing and its resultant stakes, how they understand high-stakes testing, and how they organize their school work to prepare for it from elementary to high schools. This was a good opportunity for me to understand more completely students' past experiences and perceptions, including their emotions. I did not, of course, ask students to recount their entire lives from birth until the present time. A more focused inquiry sought out their evolving attitudes, behaviors, thinking, and feelings about managing their schooling in the face of high-stakes testing.

The life-story interviews were much more unstructured. Richie (2003) emphasizes

that “a good oral history will always leave room for interviewees to speak their own minds, and will not try to shoehorn their responses into a prepared questionnaire or mind-set” (p. 32). Listening to a life story is methodologically located somewhere in the middle of interview and oral history. This autobiographical story exposes social and cultural contexts in which students are situated and how they pass through them. Additionally, I conducted parent interviews for volunteers to ascertain parents’ thinking and experiences with educating their children in a high-stakes testing context. These interviews provided evidence supporting students’ understandings of educational achievement. All interviews and life stories were audio-recorded and immediately transcribed for the ongoing data analysis.

Data were collected during the full two months of Jan. to Feb. in 2013. After completion of student interviews, one teacher and one parent from each Ara High and Maru High voluntarily participated in interviews to informing about educating children under high-stakes testing settings. All data were transcribed in Korean as soon as each interview was conducted. The data for quotes were translated into English. All school names, district names, and participants’ names were replaced with pseudonyms. In total, 33 hours of interview were conducted as indicated in Table 4.

In preparation for this study, I have collected news articles about high-stakes testing and educational policy from the main portal site of Korea for the last three years. This provides an opportunity for me to confirm theoretical implications through real occurrences and to tie the research interest to practical applications. These news articles were helpful in revising interview protocols but will not be used as a data source in this study.

	1/10~1/12	1/14~1/18	1/21~1/25	1/28~2/1	2/11~2/15	2/22~2/23
Ara High - Hyesung	v	v				
Hansol		v		v		
Gaon	v		v			
Taeyang	v				v	
Ara Girls High - Nari		v	v			
Aram		v	v			
Bada		v				
Jiwoo		v	v			
Maru High - Garam				v	v	
Bori			v	v		
Junsoo			v	v		
Dasom			v	v		
Bomi			v	v		
Danbi			v	v		
Uri					v	v
Maru Parent - Taesun					v	
Ara Parent - Hyeyoung						v
Ara Teacher - Jungsu					v	
Maru Teacher-Hyuckjoon					v	

Table 4. Interview Timeline

Data Analysis

Research questions and research propositions lead the researcher to collect the appropriate data and to analyze them using a particular strategy (Yin, 2009). The theoretical framework guides the researcher to find the appropriate analytical tool for interpretations. Stake (1995) notes that "the search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call correspondence" (p. 78). Fragments of meanings are aggregated and sometime considered via the purposeful researcher' coding and theme-finding (Mears, 2012). Research propositions from critical theories and cultural theories on students' understandings of educational achievement helped to identify notions of educational purpose, opportunity structure, class-different experiences, and cultural ideological beliefs as analytical constructs. Data analysis is the

process of understanding meanings emerging both within and across cases.

Given the ongoing and simultaneous analysis during the processes of data gathering and data analysis in qualitative research (Glesne, 2011; Merriam, 2009), an analytic strategy helps in answering the research questions. This study relies on "thematic analysis" to search for themes and patterns to answer the research question. Thematic analysis focuses upon topics and themes of experiences represented in the data rather than upon the linguistic meaning itself (Glesne, 2011). This study, then, finds meaningful themes to understand students' experiences through coding analysis, not through treating all codes equally.

To some extent the analytic process is shadowed by theoretical propositions which help "to focus attention on certain data and to ignore other data"(Yin, 2009, p. 130). Even so, the proposed process is grounded in "inductive data analysis" to find patterns and themes within and across cases (Creswell, 2007). This analysis, based on students' voices, is appropriate for the goal of expanding the implications of the theories cited above.

I manually coded the entire data line by line using internal and external codes (Yin, 2009). In particular, line by line coding was useful in my immersion in the data (Glesne, 2011). This process took place during, between, and after data collection. I relied on the coding strategy generally used in qualitative research and originally elaborated in grounded theory: Open coding transforms the raw data into derivable meanings (Merriam, 2009); axial coding or analytical coding (Glesne, 2011) is concerned with interpretation and construction of meanings. Categories established through grouping codes lead to finding patterns and themes across the data set. I reflected on the constructed categories through the criteria Merriam proposes: its responsiveness to research questions, its relevance to the study, and its capturing expressions of meanings (Merriam, 2009). The naming of categories gets help from the theoretical framework, memos jotted down

during data collection, and the collected data. After all these procedures, I arranged categories and linked them to theoretical frameworks.

Trustworthiness

Since qualitative and quantitative research is based on different philosophical assumptions and foundations, it makes little sense to apply the assessing criteria of quantitative research to qualitative research. The purpose of qualitative research is not to find "broad applicability" but to expand contextual insights (Mabry, 2008). This case study can be characterized as "petite generalization" (Mabry, 2008) and "analytic generalization" (Yin, 2009) rather than as broader generalization. Primarily, this study intends to add a context-specific understanding of cases and its implications for expanding critical theories. Then insights from this study are able to be transferred so as to understand students' experiences and consciousness under high-stakes testing and to challenge the existing system.

Even though this study is not be evaluated by quantitative research criteria, the establishment of trustworthiness is essential to the usefulness and validity of the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The process of data collection should be transparent and methodologically rigorous, and the findings should be argued on the basis of the collected data, reducing researcher biases. The whole process should be consistent with its research questions and methodology. To be a trustworthy study, this study adopts such strategies as the following.

Triangluation means the evidences supporting the findings comes from multiple forms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The primary data sources of this study are interviews with students. Also, I arranged multiple sessions for interviewing and listening to life stories throughout cases with variations of contexts. Furthermore, voluntary interviews

with parents should yield rich understandings of students' experiences within a high-stakes testing environment. Documents including news articles and official policies and statistics also play a role in validating research purposes and findings.

Member check or respondent validation (Merriam, 2009) gives an opportunity to reduce misunderstandings and to reflect on the accuracy of meanings produced by participants. Using the beginning and warm up time of multiple interviews, I double check to be sure that what I heard was what the informant actually said in the previous session. Thereafter, I sent an interview summary to each participant in order to get feedback and comments from them.

During interviews, I am responsible for treating interviewees ethically. I was careful to make sure that interviewees feel no power relations between myself and them, in accordance with the ethical guidelines of IRB and human rights. I accommodated the participants' schedules and respected their decisions and feelings. I shared more time for them to feel comfortable and to show my responsiveness and support. As a former teacher, I am concerned about the fact that teacher and student relationships might be driven by Korean cultural conventions. Thus, I intentionally withhold information about my prior occupation unless it is asked of me. Case selection, getting the informed consent, and interviewing was conducted as a transparent process, with clearly-stated criteria (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Fortunately, at the last meeting, most participants expressed gratitude for a chance to share their ideas and experiences. They said they really wanted to talk about educational experiences under high-stakes testing.

Since a qualitative case study uses the researcher as an interpretive tool (Merriam, 2009), issues of subjectivity or relativity in interpretations and non- replication are posed. However, Stake (1995) explains that:

The intent of qualitative researchers to promote a *subjective* research paradigm is

> a given. Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding (p. 45).

Interpretation should be distinguished from arbitrariness. The researcher should clarify theoretical frameworks with which s/he makes sense of data. Even though qualitative research does not invest objectivity and neutrality in interpreting realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1998), the biases of the researcher are likely to distort meanings. For readers to grasp a clear understanding of this study, the researcher's reflections, including personal experiences, positionality, assumptions, theoretical orientations, and propositions will be described throughout.

Reflectivity makes the study more rigorous (Glesne, 2011). Critical reflection and discussion of research procedures and biases are in themselves linked to critical theory as my theoretical framework. I am aware of the limitations in relation to these issues. In addition, I will also consult with my advisor to keep track of how and when the data are collected, and how categories and themes are organized.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY

I elaborate my positionality as a researcher (Banks, 1998). Overall, I am an insider in that I have experienced the test-based schooling as a former teacher and student, and I share with them language, race, and culture in a broad context. However, as a researcher studying in a foreign country, I am also an outsider. Furthermore, my positionality is not fixed (Glesne, 2011) or relational with each participant in terms of academic performance and SES. When I was in high school, I used to be a high achiever from a working-class family in an urban area. I thought high-stakes testing was my only chance to move upward in the economic hierarchy. Of course, at that time, I did not fully recognize that a society is hierarchical. Eventually what happened was that I lost my academic interest and neglected my educational needs. Instead, I gained great mechanic

skills and a capacity for rote-memorization for testing. I strongly feel I was alienated from any kind of meaningful learning through this testing system.

As a former teacher of 10 years in public secondary settings in a metropolitan city where this study take place, I witnessed many students who worked hard but failed in high-stakes testing, and consequently blamed both themselves and their parents. Despite my pushing students to achieve more academically in this system, I began to realize that structure and culture strongly affects student achievement. I also saw public schooling was being overwhelmed by private tutoring. I reflected a great deal on this system which treats students unequally and favors an able elite minority. Moreover, the economic system is not open to all students even those who work hard. Even though I applied critical pedagogies to moral studies in secondary schools without particular theoretical foundations, I still warned students to study hard. My teaching practice was contradictory. It was a reflection of the contradictions of the system.

As a parent who is educating children in both Korean and American contexts, I have hoped to have my children avoid studying competitively and mechanically. The issue of learning versus simply preparation for tests has been further complicated since the new Lee, Myung-Bak administration had adopted an education policy that epitomized the high-stakes testing of the U.S. in spite of different academic and cultural contexts. As an example of these policies, I witnessed this administration dismiss an elementary-school teacher who suggested a family field trip for her students instead of taking the NAEA on the test day. This revived national testing program from elementary to high schools is now in place. Results of the test have become the index for school and teacher evaluation. Two high-stakes tests, the CSAT and the NAEA, exist alongside each other in Korea.

As a “responsive interviewer” who is grounded in an interpretive constructionist

approach, I will try to "give voice to those who have been silenced" (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 25), being constantly aware of my own biases and building a humane relationship with participants so as to harvest deeper understandings.

The establishment of research purposes has begun with my critique of education policy and its practice, passing through contradictory experiences that took place in my personal and academic contexts. These experiences give insight throughout the research process helping me to recognize policy beliefs and testing cultures behind the good sense of policies. The practical contradictions that I feel and experience through learning and teaching practices were helpful in finding the relevant literature and theories for my interests. On the other hand, these positions explained above also reveal my biases and assumptions that might affect this research. Through this clarification, I am able to reflect critically on myself as a researcher and try not to confine this study to my own experiences.

LIMITATIONS

This study intends to look at students' lived experiences and understandings of educational achievement under high-stakes testing conditions. Since the primary focus is on students' class-based cultural experience, methodologically, ethnography probably affords a more detailed and complex description. To understand how students experience high-stakes testing through schooling, I plan to include their life stories in relation to schooling experiences of high-stakes testing without neglecting the other focus on students' current understandings and perceptions of educational achievement.

In this study, the meanings of culture are variously used. Culture in some sense has a broader context of meaning as well as subcultures between classes. This study does not elaborate on the definition of culture. In addition, cultural experiences are not

intersectionally explored in relation to other factors such as race and gender.

While the literature informing my research is primarily derived from the American context, a few studies point out that both policy beliefs and mechanisms function similarly in Korea and in the U.S. (S.-H. Park, 2010; I.-Y. Shin, 2002). In addition, as noted above, Korea already has its own high-stakes testing context in schooling. In the sense that the consequences and emerging issues are likely the same, the findings from this study may suggest implications applicable in both countries' systems of public education.

This study does not include the experiences of students whose academic performance might be classified as 'average' and who come from class in the middle range. Otherwise, the maximum variation sampling among qualitative sampling strategies (Merriam, 2009) would have been chosen. The maximum variation sampling considers the possible many criteria for choosing cases. However, it is the researchers' opinion that even maximum variation strategy does not capture students' experiences fully enough, which is not the interest of this study.

Chapter 4: Participants' Experiences of Educational Achievement

"Every day is no different for every student. After school, I come home around 4:30, have some snacks, and go to the private institute until 10:00 p.m. Soon after, I go to a reading room and study there until 12 to 1 a.m. Every day, school - private academies - a reading room. Every day, testing – studying - testing. It is very repetitive and routine." An excerpt from Jiwoo's interview

The first part of this chapter presents participants' individual experiences in their homes and schools in light of their private education, achievements, and target universities. After introducing each participant, the second part deals with how participants from Ara and Maru High make sense of educational achievement and educational purpose under the pressure of high-stakes testing, based on the data drawn from two sessions of interviews for each student. At intervals, the data from teachers and parents provide contextual information about educating children in a high-stakes testing environment.

Participants generally hold the dominant narrative of success in education. Their daily life is organized for academic success, much of it relying on private education. However, their access to private education, particularly what they could afford, differed depending on their economic conditions and their experiences in private academies. This difference of opportunity structure between participants is primarily addressed in the next chapter, while similarities in the social and cultural contexts of educational achievement are the focus of this chapter. The key findings in this chapter are that: happiness is largely identified with academic success; that there is nevertheless some conflict between the achievement ideology and conceptualizations of success; and that participants recognize the contradictions inherent to test-based achievement. In addition, my data show that the high-stakes consequences of a single test force students to bear significant burdens, most

often in the form of additional, test-driven schooling and learning. Educational achievement which means what students authentically accomplish in the form of learning and development through education is reduced to academic success under a high-stakes testing environment. Thus this chapter engages with participants' meaning-making of achievement within test-based learning practices. Nonetheless, all participants do not experience high-stakes testing in the same way. They struggle to maintain sight of their educational purpose under the overwhelming demands of tests and academics.

PARTICIPANT PROFILES AND HISTORIES

This section illustrates each participant's backgrounds and their stories for academic success. From this point forward, because these schools are situated in a similar educational environment, and prioritize academic achievement similarly, Ara High and Ara Girls High are not distinguished and are represented as Ara High, except in cases where gender marks a particular difference. For the most part, the term "private education" indicates private academy lessons or private tutoring for academic achievement. In interviews, this term was used in such a way. In order to identify participants' academic status, two types of indexes are referred to: school assessments for school size testing and the mock CSAT for nationwide testing. Grades at both the school and nation level are based on a bell curve: students from the 96th up to the 100th percentile fall in the 1st class grade; the 2nd grade begins at the 89th percentile; the 3rdgrade, the 77th percentile; the 4th grade, the 60th percentile; the 5th grade, the 40th percentile; the 6th grade, the 23rd percentile; the 7th grade, the 11th percentile; the 8th grade, the 4th percentile; and the 9th grade is reserved for students falling below the 4th percentile. When asked to clarify their target university, participants generally considered universities in Seoul good. Particularly the ten-most often listed universities are located in the capital. Some participants were

more vague, indicating their target university was "any university in Seoul."

When asked to indicate their family socioeconomic status, participants used terms like "middle," "working," and "lower-class," which are specified as such in this study. Most of them only considered economic factors. While Ara High participants confidently spoke of themselves as middle class or above, Maru High participants hesitated to use the term middle class. The term "middle" seems to embrace a broad range of statuses and to offer an ambivalent but safe zone to talk about SES. This umbrella term does not contradict the official criterion of range, as defined by the Korean government. According to the national statistics in 2011, the middle class includes 50% ($1,590) to 150% ($4,772) of the median income ($3,181) of households (Statistics Korea, retrieved from www.kosis.kr). This means 64% of the entire population fell in the middle class in 2011.

Ara High Participants

Hyesung, who falls within the 98th percentile and excels in academic achievement, studies for SKY and dreams of being a lawyer or consultant. SKY indicates the three top-tier universities in Korea, representing each by initial: Seoul National University, Korea University, and Yonsei University, respectively. The acronym also stresses the extraordinarily competitive nature of these three universities: it hardly possible, after all, to reach the sky. Interested in Law and Politics, Hyesung defined himself as a diligent student. He has a strong drive to become a lawyer in the arena of consumers. After school, he stays at the private institute from 6 p.m. to midnight, three days a week, for additional lessons in math, Korean language arts, etc., which costs $1,363 (1USD=1,100 KRW) every month. When Hyesung was a middle school senior, he applied for a specially purposed high school but did not gain admission. Soon after, his family moved from a suburb of Seoul to the Park District, so as to get him in Ara High at great inconvenience

to his father's commute. He commented on the reasons:

> My family talked about the future and recommended this prestigious school to me. My father graduated from Ara High and he stresses the importance of personal connections and networks in social life. Although we should not rely on those, he said it is not discountable.

Hyesung is presently satisfied with the atmosphere of this school, including his friends. In terms of academics, he strives to keep ahead of others and is stimulated by other high-achievers. He looks back fondly on his elementary days, when he felt relatively free from academic burdens and had enjoyed playing soccer. He knows that high school is the most important period of preparation in his life and views studying and his future optimistically. His family is dedicated to his academic success, providing financial and emotional support. According to him, his parents – both of them professionals – prioritize academic success for their children's futures. Their higher expectations motivate him, and he pushed himself to reach them.

Nari is similar to Hyesung in terms of achievement, relocation, and future goals. Nari, whose achievement is in the 89thto 96th percentile, wants to be a lawyer after graduation from Yonsei (Y) University. Her family moved to the Park District from a local province when she finished elementary school. She talked about their relocation to the Park District in this metropolitan city:

> My mother quit her job due to the move and my father obtained another job in Seoul. The local city where we lived does not have good education or teachers. The Park District is known for educational advancement, so we chose to live here, which turned out to be an excellent decision.

Her mother decided to quit her secure job in deference to the children's education. Nari said that, compared to their old city, living in the Park District is very satisfactory in that high standards of private education are available. Nari attends private academies every day until 10 p.m. and afterwards goes to a reading room to study - a common private

facility, with a quiet and independent study area for students. Recently, she has had to stay until midnight at the private institute to take a special course scheduled during the break. There she gets math tutoring in a small group of similar ability. For her special lecture and extra lessons, Nari's family spends over $1,818 a month. Aspiration for English fluency brought her to the Philippines a couple of times for a few months. She confidently said she lives in an economically prosperous condition. She estimated that the heaviest expenditure of her family might be on education.

Nari is well informed of various strategies to get into her target department at Y University, though she thinks schooling is a dull and monotonous process for college admission. She likes Korean and math classes, and is pleased with her grades for those subjects, but hates English class, which she scores lower in. She said her elementary school days gave her freedom from this kind of education for college admission and she felt happy with friends at that time. She compares her childhood to her younger siblings' realities. They experience more stress, as study pressures have risen earlier in children's educational careers. She is currently uncertain regarding her future job, and is now considering being an economic lawyer. At first, she thought she might work as a certified public accountant or for the Bank of Korea. However, as the first child and granddaughter, she is determined to live up to the high expectations of her grandparents, and took more prestigious jobs into consideration.

Aram, who does well scholastically, around the 89th percentile and studies for Y University to be a lawyer, moved to the Park District from another district in Seoul when she was in her 6th grade of elementary school. Her private education for the main three subjects costs her family $1,818 per month. She stays at the academy until 10 p.m. after school every day. She is content with teachers in her school and with instructors in her private academy.

She is modest about her academic achievement, and does not define herself as a high achiever. While she hates taking the standardized test because of its overwhelming influence on her future, she thinks testing is required to reward diligent students. Because she watched her brother retake the CSAT three years due to his consecutive failures in gaining admission from a top-tier university, she said she knows how important it is to study hard during high school. She is very sensitive to university rankings. As regards the purpose of high school, she places her top priority on admission to Y University and her second priority is making and maintaining strong friendships.

Although her goal is to become a lawyer, she said it is still in the air and her only apparent goal is to get into a good university. Thus she most envies those attending elite universities. From her early days, she was immersed into private education such as piano, essay writing, math, English, Korean, etc. She especially fears math because of her terrible memory in elementary school. Although she performed very highly on math at that time and received prizes in various competitions, once her mother took her to a private academy for math-talented students, she was disappointed with her ability relative to others and she has lacked confidence in math since.

Hansol, who is ranked between the 89th to 96th percentiles, is preparing for universities in the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, the U.S. and Korea. When he was young, his family lived in the U.K. for two years because of his father's study. Afterwards, his father was appointed to the Korean consulate in the U.K. and there he attended a private middle school for three years. After life abroad, Hansol's family moved near Ara High from a suburb of Seoul. It was his mom's plan for him to attend Ara High because of the school's prestige. During winter vacation, he goes to a private institute for AP tests from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. every day.

He contends that his foreign schooling experience contrasts to his current

schooling, which helps him recognize the contradictions of the Korean secondary educational system. He said that at least learning in the U.K. does not exist only for testing. He prefers education in the U.K. and its referential system for colleges to the Korean competitive high-stakes system. Students there trust teachers, even entrusting their entire evaluation to teachers. In contrast, Hansol has an aversion to the Korean educational system and distrusts its procedures. He often talked about these feelings to his friends, who agree that three factors are required to succeed here: money, information, and IQ.

Gaon's family moved to another area in the Park District in order to send him to Ara High. He strongly wanted to attend this school due to its reputation and male-specific environment. His achievement level lies in the 20th to 30th percentile in school assessment. During winter vacation, his private education expense amounts to $1,363 a month for lessons for TOEIC (the Test of English for International Communication by Educational Testing Service). His only current preparation for universities is his TOEIC training, and he dreams to be a hotel chef. Gaon studied in Canada for two years without his family when he was in 4th grade. This was his mother's plan, as she felt that fluency in English is foundational in Korea. He said he cried a lot while studying abroad because he was too young to endure loneliness. He was a high performer in his elementary school as well as in Canada. However, he experienced a significant disparity in the curriculum as soon as he returned, especially in math.

Gaon currently enjoys high school life and making friends. He most hates math because his math scores have not increased, despite intensive efforts. Since he came back from Canada, he has tried to do his best in math but has still ended up with low scores. He therefore decided to prioritize his TOEIC score for university admission. At the same time, he is planning to undertake vocational training at another vocational high school in

the next year, then to parlay this certification towards college admission. Through a book written by a famous chef, he learned that studying abroad is necessary for success, even in the area of cooking.

His parents had high expectations of his academic success until he went to middle school, because he was very successful socially and academically during elementary school. He has since lost confidence in academic success and changed his direction for the future. To some degree, his parents have compromised their expectations for scores and have decided to support his academics financially as much as he wanted.

Taeyang whose achievement is at the 30th percentile, studied at a private elementary school in the U.S. without his family. He had caused trouble so often that his mother consulted with his teacher and decided to send him abroad. According to him, his foreign schooling was not successful in that he spent less time obtaining ability in English, and more time playing computer games with older "home-stay" Korean students. However, he said he was happy to have make many multicultural friends and to have performed well in his classes.

He originally lived in the Park District; after, his family moved near Ara High. Taeyang, who likes to play sports and has excellent athletic ability, struggles to qualify for universities in Seoul and often feels frustrated with his scores. Recently, he has tried to study hard and he receives private education at his parents' request, but he was expelled from the private institute due to his low achievement and negative attitude. He dreams of being a public prosecutor who helps ensure justice for all, but does not articulate this dream to his parents and friends for fear of their ridicule. Nonetheless, he said he enjoys his high school life and making friends. Unlike his earlier days, he tries to be a well-behaved student and to foster good relationships with teachers. He said he knows his teachers do not have high expectations of his academics.

Bada generally enjoys studying and making friends in her high school. She understands the main purpose of schooling as preparation to enter universities. She has grown up in the Park District since she was under grade-school. She firmly believes that effort leads to success in high-stakes tests, college entrance exams, and jobs. She confesses that she feels stressed by the competitive tests, which are critical to her GPA. Her achievement in the main subjects is in the middle, while in other subjects she lags behind, ranking around the 30th to 40th percentile. Her family contributes $909 every month to her everyday private education. She usually stays until 10 p.m. at a private institute and during the exam period, she goes to a reading room after private academy to study until 1to 3 a.m. Her parents are financially supportive of her academics. Her father runs a private business and her mom works for the government. Recently, she has struggled to figure out her future occupation. Among her friends, conversations tend to circulate around the themes of "boys," "dating," "TV stars," "scores," "teachers" or "information about private lessons." She reported that her school teachers do not have high expectations of her.

Jiwoo clearly divides her school life between the academic and the social. While she gets the most pleasure from her social life, in pursuit of friendship and extracurricular activities, she is stressed by frequent tests and test-based learning. She is very involved in student-initiated activity for dramatic performances in the high school. She is also interested in childcare and infant rearing. Every day, she goes to a private academy for math and English until 10 p.m. and after she studies at home or in a reading room. She points out that the hardest thing for her is to commit to a goal and a target university. When she thinks about jobs, she said, she always has to consider her scores and her prospects. She struggles to negotiate between her future dream and current scores, as well as between her aptitude for the job and its social circumstances. Her achievement in

school assessment is around the 23rd to 40th percentile, while she scores between the 60th to 77th percentiles in the mock CSAT. She spoke a great deal about her school's high achievement: it has on average a third-class grade (up to the 77th percentile) in the nationwide mock CSAT, which makes it impossible for her to outrank her peers.

	Gender	Achievement Level		Private Education	Studying Abroad	Professional or University Aspirations	SES Claim
		Nationwide Level(the mock CSAT)	School Level				
Hyesung	M	the 96th percentile	the 98th percentile	$1,363 Korean, math	no	Lawyer/ SKY	the middle class
Hansol	M	the 96th percentile	the 89th to 96th percentile	AP tests	3 years	Economic Professional /Study abroad	the middle class
Gaon	M	-	the 20th to30th percentile	$1,363 English	2 years	Chef/in Seoul	above the middle class
Taeyang	M	-	the 30th percentile	$545 math	2 years	Public prosecutor /in Seoul	above the middle class
Nari	F	the 96th percentile	the 93rd to 96th percentile	$1,818 math, English, science	a few months	Lawyer /Y or the highest rank	above the middle class
Aram	F	the 89th to 96th percentile	the 89th percentile	$1,818 Korean, English, math	no	Lawyer /Y or the highest rank	the middle class
Bada	F	the 77th percentile	the 30th to 40th percentile	$909 English	no	Not decided/in Seoul	above the middle class
Jiwoo	F	the 60th to 77th percentile	the 23rd to 40th percentile	$727 math, English	no	Not decided/in Seoul	the middle class

Table 5. Ara High Participants

It was surprising to hear that all six students relocate to Ara High and to the Park District, which is well known for educational advancement, particularly in terms of private education and prestigious schools. Participants are aware that their school name will distinguish them. Even in terms of social networks, high school fosters connections that will pay off in the future. In relocating, some parents are forced to make longer commutes or to quit their jobs, not to mention the great expense of renting or purchasing a home. The average price of apartments in this area is more than double the entire average of Seoul.

Regarding private education, on the whole, before the elementary level, Ara High participants begin learning art, music, sports, and academic subjects such as math, Chinese letters, and Korean language arts, in the form of private tutoring, private academies, and home-study materials purchased from education companies. From the higher elementary grades onward, they concentrate on math, Korean essay-writing, and English, leaving non-academic lessons behind, and continue to learn math and English through private education until high school. All forms of lessons implicated students in curriculum acceleration. In high school, their primary math and English tutoring, and in the private academy, their supplementary social studies and science lessons focus on the CSAT. Certain students attempt to master high school English and math in middle school.

Maru High Participants

Dasom whose academic achievement exceeds the 96th percentile in school assessment but is at the 77th percentile in the mock CSAT, likes to learn science and math, and would like to become a scientific researcher in the future. She believes effort determines scores, and reports that the competitive environment motivates her to study. Since she felt private education interferes with her autonomy and self-direction in

studying, she quit all private lessons since her middle school. She was raised in the River District and indicated the class status of her family as middle-lower. She said:

> I wish my family was rich. I think about that a lot. Then I could do what I want to do and I could study abroad. That is my dream. Without worry, I am able to study. If I had visited a foreign country during my younger days, I could have learned English. My family could not afford it.

She struggles to achieve a good grade in English and in Korean language arts in the mock CSAT. Her scores are at the top in her school but fall far short in the nationwide test. She defines herself as a quiet and ordinary student who liked painting and translating Japanese in middle school. She is an independent student and child both at school and home. Extra help or support from her parents has not been available since her youth, except for her mother's emphasis on reading. She has not decided her target university yet. According to her, she has just two choices, entering a top-tier university or taking a civil service exam. Her mother has requested she select one of these two options. Thus, her primary goal in high school is to get into a good university; barring that, she will take an exam to be a civil servant. She thinks her educational background will privilege her in terms of the job market, income, and even marriage in this society.

Bomi, who actively participates in school activities and events, wanted to be a teacher once but she is not sure now. She goes to a private academy for 7 days a week and spends $636 a month for all subjects. She hates the feeling that testing limits her to studying only testing-related content. Her academic achievement is between the 89th and 96th percentiles in school assessment and the 77th percentile in the nationwide test. She attributes this big gap between school assessment and the nationwide scale tests to her school's achievement, which is seriously low. She said she was brought up to showing courtesy and manners as the child of a teacher. She looks back on her earlier days, when she felt loneliness resulting from her double-income family structure, and struggled to

make her personality more outgoing. The maternal vacuum she experienced after school made her independent, she said.

Throughout her schooling, she has enjoyed good relationships with teachers and friends. From middle school, her scores began to improve gradually and considerably. She values the importance of building special memories during the late teens, even under stress and the pressure of studying. Further, she has long-term moral aspirations in the future. She thinks she was influenced by her parents' values. They continue to do service learning in the community for the disenfranchised. This serve has prompted her to value morality and human relationships beyond academic success in high school.

Danbi was raised by her grandmother until the 1st grade due to her mother's work. Since the 2nd grade, Danbi managed to take care of herself after school. She envied most of her friends, whose mothers were waiting for them and prepared lunches after school. Danbi's self-reliance resulted in compliments and encouragement from people around her and her parents. She said, however, that these also led to psychological distance between her and her parents. This emotional experience led her to consider becoming a counselor in the future.

During middle school, she was not an excellent student in terms of academic performance and appropriate behavior. She did not receive any attention from teachers and friends. From high school, she began to devote attention to studying. Her achievement level is in the 96th percentile in her school and the 60th to 77th percentile in the mock CSAT. She dreams to be a social worker or a psychologist, but still struggles to identify her future job; people have told her that these kinds of jobs are not well paid, although they require long years of education. She is sensitive to people's perspectives and judgments because of her negative memories of being bullied during middle school.

Thus, she reported that now she just studies to get high grades without an apparent

target university or department. She enjoys Korean literature class, which offers various people' stories, but hates English due to her bad pronunciation. The expense of her private education for all subjects amounts to $454 per month. She is grateful to her parents for funding her private education.

Bori, who is interested in politics, prepares for universities in Seoul. His concrete goals are not yet settled. His grade is at the 90th percentile in school assessment and around the 40th to 60th percentile in the mock CSAT. He enjoys high school life as a hardworking student. He generally studies at school until 10 p.m. and often goes to a reading room. Since he was a senior in middle school, he has not received private education because he thought it was a waste of money and it was not helpful for raising scores. He has an aversion to mechanic repetitive learning through private education. He leads a school club where students gather voluntarily to study hard and collaboratively. He said he is academically oriented in high school, and his primary goal is to gain admission. He is reluctant to define himself as a high achiever due to his school's low achievement.

He enjoys languages and social studies class but hates math. Due to high pressure on math scores from his earlier education, he refuses to study math. In elementary school, he excelled academically in his class, which did not last until middle school. In high school, he gets mutual encouragement from friends to study hard. He reported that he maintains a good relationship with his parents, without conflict. When selecting a high school, he had thought of attending vocational school. However, his parents recommended general high school to him, saying that it was be too early to decide his future path.

Junsoo said his high school life is fine in that he is able to make friends. He was born in a local city and raised there until middle school, when his family moved to Seoul.

His achievement is at the 20th percentile in the school and his favorite subject is physical education and sports. He indulged in computer games during middle school that he could not catch up in academics. Furthermore, he accrued absences frequently and often fought with his mom. His family currently lives apart from his father, who works at a construction site in a local province. Junsoo also works part time at a fast-food restaurant after school until late at night. The money from his work helps his mom and brother pay utilities.

While he desperately needed vocational training for future life, he was denied the job training due to intense competition. This commissioned education is organized for students attending general high schools, who need vocational training their senior year. This denial sparked frustration and uncertainty about his future. He said his biggest concern is that he does not know how to prepare for his future. He declares that studying is not his goal and wants to get into a 2-year community college. He said with a shy smile that he wants to be an actor, but worries about the profession. He decided to stay in school for a high school diploma despite boring and useless classes. When he graduated from middle school, he wanted to attend vocational schools. However, no school would admit him due to his low achievement and low attendance rate. He was almost expelled to a school in other district.

Uri classifies her family as low-income and her background as working-class and refrains from requesting private education due to money. Private education until middle school did not make a difference in her academic achievement so she quit it. She performs around the 23rd percentile in school assessment and struggles especially in math. Both tuition and scores are taken into consideration in her selection of universities, and she aspires to get into public or state universities. She defines the primary purpose of schooling as making friends and studying well. She questions the Korean educational

system which forces students only to study for success. However, she tries not to worry about it much.

Her biggest concern is math. She knows that scores in high school depend on math. Her original interests lay in art, music, and sports rather than academics. However, she recognizes that social mobility comes through education and a good occupation. She shows a stronger aspiration for upward social mobility than her parents. She strives to find her path and job during high school. She hopes there is a "right" job for her class status and score level.

Garam is interested in math and astronomy. He was raised by his grandparents in a local city due to his parents' work. Then, his mother quit her job to take care of the children. Garam thinks schooling provides practice in social life to students. He did not care about studying until middle school. According to him, new experiences in high school brought the importance of universities to his attention. He aims for early admission through the admission counselor system, using his 80th percentile GPA, a personal statement, and an interview, like other high achievers at Maru High. He wants to major in biology at a national or state university. Even if he fails to be admitted to state universities, he said, he does not plan to retake the CSAT. He tries to study in his own style, because private education involves cramming and an overwhelming amount of homework. Free internet lectures by the Educational Broadcast System (EBS) helps his academics.

He was so moved by his recent volunteer service, taking care of senior citizens who live alone, that he wants to do volunteer work consistently:

> As a goal of my life, I would like to volunteer for the community. If I major in biology, I will donate my gifts to senior citizens. I will let them know useful information about the body and food. When I did service learning during winter vacation, it was to deliver lunch and food to seniors. They expressed gratitude to

me, and sometimes grabbed my hand and cried. I felt bad and make a resolution to help them consistently.

Garam had meaningful experiences which affect his thoughts on social welfare. He is interested in talking about issues of economic inequality and social security. He shows a concern about social welfare for the disenfranchised in society.

	Gender	Achievement Level		Private Education	Studying Abroad	Professional or University Aspirations	SES Claim
		Nationwide Level	School Level				
Dasom	F	the 77th percentile	the 96th percentile	no	no	Scientific researcher /the upper rank in Seoul	the lower class
Bomi	F	the 77th percentile	the 89th to 96th percentile	$636 all subjects	no	Educator /the upper and middle rank in Seoul	the middle class
Danbi	F	the 60th to 77th percentile	the 96th percentile	$454 all subjects	no	Counselor or yet /the upper rank in Seoul	the middle or average class
Bori	M	the 40th to 60th percentile	the 90th percentile	no	no	In the area of politics/in Seoul	the working class
Junsoo	M	the 10th percentile	the 20th percentile	no	no	The 2-year college around Seoul	the lower class
Garam	M	the 60th percentile	the 80th percentile	no	no	State Universities	the working or middle class
Uri	F	-	the 23rd percentile	no	no	Therapist/State Universities around Seoul	the lower class

Table 6. Maru High Participants

Most Maru High participants aim for early admission through the admission counselor system because they place little confidence in the CSAT. This type of college

entrance, which takes place primarily through interviews, has been introduced to better reflect students' aptitudes, attitudes, and passion. Maru High participants do not rely much on private education. In addition, compared to Ara High counterparts, their schooling did not begin with private education. Private education does not play a leading role in their academic achievement and schooling experiences. Nonetheless, they generally are strongly motivated for academic achievement. They tend to have managed their studying by themselves, from their early schooling to the present.

THE IDEOLOGY OF ACHIEVEMENT AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS

This section focuses on how participants are situated through schooling and how they understand educational achievement in a competitive, high-stakes testing environment. From these students' voices, a strong cultural and social belief about education emerged: educational achievement is narrowly understood in terms of academic advancement relative to peers, in an environment where social desires for success take precedence over educational achievement. While educational achievement in its broadest sense indicates what students learn and accomplish through education, the students in this study understand achievement only in terms of success or failure in an academic hierarchy. The inextricable relationship between schooling and success frames their overall educational purposes and overpowers educational needs. Under the prevailing social threat that low achievement deserves poor treatment and discrimination, participants strive for high scores without taking into account their academic interests and needs. During this process, they acquiesce to values implicit to testing, such as competitive achievement and hierarchy as bestowed through effort, and ascribe to win-lose discourses associated with high-stakes testing. However, at the same time, these participants recognize the contradictions inherent to academic success achieved only

through test-based practices. They struggle to find their educational purpose and continue to think about it as a negotiation between their own needs and social desires.

Social and Ideological Construction of Happiness

As regards the purpose of schooling, all participants primarily refer to the term "happiness." Most participants modified their future paths to construct happiness as a socially-compelled desire. Happiness sounds individual and idealized, but it is understood in terms of material realities: social success, purchasable objects and secure jobs. While participants establish goals for schooling in the name of happiness, social pressures construct that happiness in terms of a stable job with a high salary. Socially-defined success strongly shapes participants' understanding of happiness and education.

Participants often hear from parents and the media about the miseries of life without a stable job and certain amount of money in a free competitive society. Bada stated:

> I hope my dream comes true. Then, my life would be successful and happy. My dream is to enter a good university. If I get into a prestigious university and prospective major, then it will be easier to get a good job. I think my dream is similar to what the society wants us to do.

She conceptualizes a prestigious university as a necessity for success, and success is understood in terms of wealth. Gaon's experience at school and home also shaped his understanding of happiness in terms of social success. He confirmed:

> I think I feel happiest when I do what I want to do. Then I am successful. Even if I do what I want to do, to be honest, I would undergo hardships if I earn about 3,000 to 4,000 dollars a month. No doubt it would be better to be materially successful. People go to university to make a lot of money and achieve success. The purpose of a good job is also for making a fortune.

Material desires determine his understanding of goals and happiness. Happiness seems to refer to educational needs but its specific meaning is confined to socially awarded jobs.

The individual aspect of happiness usually relates to the future work that students want to do, and at the same time this work is influenced by a context of social desires. This tension, between individual goals and socially-determined markers of success, constructs participants' greater sense of "success" and "happiness."

Some identify their happiness with social success more optimistically. They understand the economic context of society and try to adjust their meaning of happiness to this context. Nari said:

> For me, to live happy is to be successful. In order for me to be happy, I should do what I like to do. I want to fulfill the expectations of people around me. My life should be economically prosperous like my family. When you are a higher-achieving student, you have more choices for universities. Likewise, if I am economically prosperous, I can choose the work I want to do. Material realties may extend the range of my choices.

Nari combines her concept of success with her concept of happiness: that is, to do the work that she really wants to undertake in the future. This work is related to economic prosperity and social prestige. Most participants responded similarly to the idea of happiness. When they were again asked about what kind of work makes them happy, most of them articulated happiness in relation to money and social judgments.

Social success seems to override alternative possibilities for achieving happiness through schooling. This notion revokes Marcuse's critique on ideological process, through which desires are standardized, universalized, and identified via a false consciousness for happiness in advanced industrial society (Marcuse, 1964). Even when not overtly articulated, ideology remains embedded within the process; in relating socially, one tacitly internalizes social norms and values. Similarly, when students study for success throughout their schooling, they become immersed in social desires that are taken to signify happiness. Thus, it may be that the ideology that social success determines happiness pervades their consciousness of educational achievement.

Participants' identification with social desires remained evident through years of their schooling, as evinced in the interviews.

The desire for success in society instigates competition and forces comparisons among students. All participants are conditioned with a desire for a better life through parents and teachers, regardless of their achievement level or socioeconomic status. Taeyang said:

> My father pushed me too much to make him happy. He compares my grades to his friend's son's all the time. He talks about someone who was admitted to K University and another to another university…My mom tells me every day that some achieve a great deal in the U.S. and compares them with me. In the past, I got stressed out but now I do not care.

He is constantly and unrelentingly compared with his cousins, friends, and siblings in terms of achievement and even educational passion. Comparisons may hurt students and negatively affect their identity formation. In educational competitions, achievement inextricably presupposes "others" for comparisons all the time.

Participants' hopes for success are closely connected to material desires. Furthermore, a better life seems to mean living better than others. In overheated competition, students strive to outdo their peers. Jungsu, a teacher at Ara High, said, "We need to applaud students who obtain even the second-class grade (up to the 89th percentile) but in reality the first-class grade (up to the 96th percentile) students are the only ones who are satisfactory. No students should be content with his or her grades, except for the top four percent." Most participants dream of success through education. However, success is supposed to be given only to very few students. Students understand that this is inevitable in a context determined by high-stakes testing and intense competition.

Furthermore, the interview data indicates a strong culture consciously and unconsciously encouraging students to endure present suffering and even contradiction

for future happiness. The purpose of schooling primarily determines success in the future. Participants tend strongly to identify happiness with success. Enduring current pressures, however miserable, is necessary to reach happiness and success in the future.

Society urges them to be happy and be successful. If not, they will be losers. Participants carry strong fears and anxieties about their future. They have witnessed the difficult lives of people without college diplomas. They negotiate with the society not to be a failure. Nari said, "In Korean society, we are not approved of without a college degree." Along the same lines, Garam affirmed:

> Students who do not study hard and easily give up will be failures. In my school, there are a lot of unmotivated students who do not know why they study. I have seen how they live. Around here, many people do not even graduate from college. Students in my school seldom go to university, especially 4-year institutions in Seoul. They are taking on delivery work or part-time jobs.

Garam connects students' lack of purpose and effort to future job insecurity. Further, unemployment and recession in a macro perspective are related to low academic achievement in the micro perspective. Participants tended to link people without good jobs to students in their schools who do not study hard. They tend to equate lower-pay, working-class jobs with low achievement in school.

Social stigma is imposed on a specific class. Participants are aware of hierarchical structures, including the society's occupational structure, and strive not to be losers because losers bear social disdain. Bomi remarked on this:

> Although you graduate from a university, you are not sure to get a job. Yet even in this reality, if I do not have a college diploma, I am afraid of being viewed with contempt. In this society, it is definitely right to follow the designated path rather than to take an individual detour. I feel repulsed by it but I cannot contradict it.

Bomi understands that society defines the meaning of a happy life in terms of academic success, which is not easy to refute because everybody seems to accept that discourse. Participants in my study consistently explained that they could not ignore social warnings

conveyed by parents and teachers. Doing so would make them failures. They realize that society has only winners and losers, which pushed them to study harder. This social threat is too strong and prevailing to overcome.

In addition to social pressures for success, participants consciously and unconsciously related low achievers to lower social class status and to failure in the labor market. Happiness is defined in terms of falling within an acceptable social class. Taeyang, whose achievement is low and whose background is upper-class, confessed:

> If I keep making these grades, I will be a failure. This is because I perform poorly. If you do not succeed in school, there is nothing for you to do except for a manual labor. Job rankings are so stringent and the resulting discrimination is pervasive in our culture.

He seems aware that societal pressures are too severe to overcome. At the same time, he is afraid of becoming a "loser" in society. The most frequently heard message from parents and teachers is to study harder, not to learn from one's mistakes in the future. This may come out of the awareness of the harsh realities that accompany a highly competitive society. Moreover, these students generally place responsibility on the individual. Participants in my study rarely attributed their own achievement to others - good or poor teacher, for example - or to their circumstances. They consistently reported that all, ultimately, is up to them. It seems as though they unconsciously accept all responsibility for their outcomes, and whether they become successful or not. This places extraordinary pressure on them. The ideology success and achievement is part of the unconscious fabric of the culture, which works as a potential framework to judge others and to make sense of educational achievement.

Jeong (Y.-J. Jeong, 2011), in an analysis of neoliberal educational policies focusing on excellence, competition, and school choice, argues that gain won through competition are understood as right rewards resulting from the individual effort, so that

accountability is attributed to personal merit. He noted that, thus, "students and parents recognize the issue of academic achievement as resulting from their own choice and condition, rather than in relation to structural inequality" (p.42). Despite class barriers, educational inequality is not viewed as resulting from class structures. In my own data, participants too showed this disposition, in that they attributed the issue of achievement to themselves, overlooking opportunity structures, in spite of their experiences in unequal socioeconomic circumstances.

The interview data has shown that from their earliest days, students have been exposed to competition and academic hierarchy. They are brought up in a high-stakes testing context in which academic achievement overwhelms other educational needs and purposes. The ultimate educational purpose is embodied by test-based scores. Lipman (2004) analyzed high-stakes education policies that reframes the purpose of education into academic attainment based on testing. Given this situation, academic achievement is understood as much narrower test scores. She showed how such educational policies at the macro level affect students' and teachers' educational experiences in the micro level, through the cultural construction of social inequality. Likewise, throughout my own data, students' educational purposes and practices reflect macro political and economic levels which instigate competition, high standards, efficiency, and self-determination. Ultimately, these ideas shape the educational purposes and happiness of participants. During the schooling process, students are inculcated to think of happiness in terms of test-based academic achievement. They fear becoming failures as a result of low achievement. They are under extraordinary pressure to compete for success throughout their schooling.

Conflicts between Conceptions of Happiness

As described in the previous section, participants' understanding of educational achievement largely reveals the social construction of happiness in terms of success. However, they did not passively accept society's designation of happiness. Some question the ultimate meaning of happiness, while others exhibited a tension between the individual and the social. Although most participants do not exactly figure out what and how they would prefer to learn in the absence of test-driven education, they are aware that their futures are socially shaped. In response, some students resist the unilateral pursuit of social success during schooling, and others strive to find their own ideas of happiness. Low achievers in my study seem critical of their ability to succeed through high-stakes testing and competition, while high achievers, particularly those from the upper class, are more likely to be confident in gaining happiness through social success. In addition, doubts regarding the dominant definition of happiness arose regardless of class background or achievement level.

Garam understands that social success does not necessarily produce individual contentment. His concept of happiness is a negotiation between individual happiness and social success. Garam said:

> I think success means living prosperously while doing my hoped-for job. High-achieving students do not always succeed, and, underperforming students might be able to succeed later through business success. My criteria are the work that I want to do and material access. Some people who are socially successful are doing work that they do not really want to do.

Garam's notion of success combines the dominant narrative and his own observations. He understands high achievement does not guarantee success. At the same time, he tempers his own view of success with what other people want and expect. He knows that success does not perfectly correspond to happiness in this tension. However, material satisfaction is deeply imbricated within the notion of success.

Some participants in this study also try to keep a middle distance between two concepts. They want neither to entirely ignore social success, nor to lose their own happiness. Hyesung spoke with confidence:

> I pursue a balance between my happiness and social success. In the future, even though it sounds vague, if I am competent, I will be happy. Social success implies prestige and wealth. I take a middle path because I need to succeed as much as I need to be happy. A certain level of competence is a precondition of my happiness and success.

Hyesung seeks a balance between happiness and success. He admits that he cannot avoid the socially-determined concept of success. At the same time, he does not want to abandon his own ideas of future happiness. Generally, during the oral life history portion of the interview, participants' dreams and conditions of happiness existed, apart from academic success and material desire. As years went on, however, they adjusted their dreams to fit social desires or abandoned their own needs. For example, Aram dreamed of being a writer during her elementary school days but she began to recognize that such a job is neither valued nor well-paid in society. Most importantly, her mother dissuaded her from pursuing such a career. Over time, Aram said she realized high academic achievement gave her more opportunities to succeed. She thereby adjusted her dreams to her score and decided to be a lawyer, a choice with which her parents are content.

In contrast, one participant was very unique in defining and owning her dream. Bomi struggles to maintain her own definition of happiness separate from social preconditions. She talked about her position on social success:

> Successful people in this society obtain - no surprise - power and wealth. In this culture, realizing your potential means obtaining big money, prestige, high status, and power. The society is harsh to the weak and gentle to the strong, as it were. It should be the opposite but it is unavoidable. Power, prestige, and money. My family also says that when we can buy anything and do what we want without any concern over money, we will be happy. To be honest, I am fine to the extent that others do not ignore me. There are many rich people who commit suicide. In the

> past, I did not understand how poor people live. Now I think that money does not guarantee happiness. If I were rich, I would have stress. People would gather around me for money, not for me. I value humanity and human relationships. I would like to have a valuable job in the future, so that I could smile later.

Bomi often mentioned "values" in her educational purpose. She tries to recognize the distinction between social success and individual happiness. Although society strongly connects individual happiness through academic success to social success, some strive for their own happiness.

Taeyang who struggles to make sense of his educational objectives, still refuses to live up to social expectations. Though he has difficulty in finding his future path through schooling, his goal for happiness was not entirely based on social success. He said:

> In school, high scores mean unconditional success. To be a success in this society is to make a lot of money and to have a secure and admirable occupation, such as a teacher, public prosecutor, lawyer, or doctor. However, I am different. I define success in terms of doing my own work and working really enthusiastically. Then, others will recognize my success.

Taeyang reported that he began to identify his own direction towards happiness. Of course, he struggles to find what he really wants. Most of all, his current target job requires the highest academic score. He knows that without academic attainment, his goal cannot be reached. He is, however, determined to not to let social norms define happiness and success for him.

Most students in this study define happiness as doing the work they really want to do. For the majority, this work stands in for their concept with social success, but for some that kind of work is in tension with it. Uri, who understands that her current academic status will not lead to social success, said she wants to find a suitable job for her aptitude and ability. She said:

> Actually, I do not exactly know what I want. In middle school, I thought seriously about what makes me happy. What kind of job will not lead to regret? I decided to become a therapist, who gives happiness to people and cures them. I know this

> work does not meet the standards of social success. However, if I am content with this work and I feel a sense of accomplishment, I think, I would be happy and in the best possible line of work.

Uri worries about becoming a failure in society, stuck with low achievement and a low-ranking job. However, she maps out her own course for happiness by light of her own academic standing and economic status. She placed a great deal of faith in education's ability to help her live better than her parents and move upward.

Whether students identify their happiness with social success or not, most participants struggle in a context where their schooling is strongly shaped by social determinants of success. Before students construct their own meanings of happiness and educational purpose, the purpose of schooling is preconditioned. Schooling, particularly high-stakes testing, plays a critical role in reproducing an achievement ideology (Apple, 2004, 2006; Leonardo, 2003b), consciously or unconsciously stigmatizing low achievement (McNeil & Valenzuela, 2001), and justifying the existing political and economic order (Au, 2011; Giroux, 2010). Nonetheless, student agency allows room for constructing contrary beliefs and tensions with the dominant ideology (Giroux, 1983a, 1983b, 2001). Students are not entirely passive in pursuing social success. They sense contradictions to the dominant discourse within their practical experiences. They continue to articulate their own meanings of educational achievement during schooling.

The supposed link between achievement and happiness is confirmed and further reproduced through schooling, particularly through high-stakes testing. Thus, it is conveyed that happiness is obtained through individual effort and achievement. Although participants in my study sometimes recognize this idea of happiness as too universal, unilateral, and dehumanized, they understand that the social formation is so overwhelming that they could never entirely detach from this pressure. Throughout the interviews, their own views of happiness remain secondary to the overall emphasis on

happiness as success. Accordingly, the students could not help but participate in those practices, even when holding conflicting and contrary ideas. The valorization of social success and the stigmatization of "losers" maintain social pressure with psychological threats. Participants are alerted to their future success or failure within every test. The ideological concept of happiness is reduced to the academic discourse of schooling. Whether overtly revealed or not, this notion informs their understandings of achievement and serves as a potential reference in making decisions related to education.

The Discourse of Academic Hierarchy

This section articulates some educational peculiarities in the Korean schooling process. The dominant means of schooling centers on academic achievement in testing. Academic achievement comes to mean something much like academic credentials, rather than an authentic reflection of what students accomplish and how they develop. Within the context of highly stratified universities with test-based entrance systems, educational background and credentials are supposed to determine students' social status in the future. The prior sections deal with how the concept of social success alters notions of happiness and how students struggle between the two. This section focuses more on the dominant narrative around academic attainment within a strict hierarchy of education. In this context, achievement is not necessarily related to learning. It primarily stands for an *academic clique and property,* connected to where students graduate.

Participants generally accept the unilateral relationship between good grades, a top-tier university, a stable job, and wealth. Schooling is understood to classify them by scores, rather than to help students achieve a happy life in the future. Students' futures and dreams are entirely predicated on their grades. Schools mediate the tension between happiness and success, producing the discourse that social success is achieved through

academic attainment. Schooling is the cultural practice that bridges those conflicts. Academic success in school is directly related to success in the society.

Furthermore, in students' understandings of achievement, two beliefs become apparent. On one hand, upward mobility through education is possible in society. In other words, social success is grounded in academic success. On the other hand, participants are accustomed to the stratified distribution of positions as meritocratic rewards for educational achievement. They seem to only understand the determining influence of academic ability; other abilities are not recognized in the high-stakes system. While the discourse of academic hierarchy shapes their entire schooling process, it does not necessarily mean they do not understand, at least partially, the contradictions of the achievement ideology.

Education for Success and Success through Education

Education is much more narrowly confined to attaining high scores in testing and accordingly attending the corresponding universities. The ultimate goal is possession of a top-tier university diploma, rather than educational development. Hansol struggles to figure out what to pursue through schooling, although he currently aims to gain admission to top universities in Korea, Hong Kong, the U.K. and the U.S. He understands that society wants them to compete in the academic hierarchy, but feels confused about whether this is what he wants. Hansol said:

> Mothers hope their children will obtain the best grades, enter top-level SKY universities and get highly paid and secure jobs, whether they go to medical school, law school or business school. Society also forces us to do so. It is difficult to resist it. The jobs that are most often indicated as "good" presuppose graduation from top universities.

Hansol states that he originally might have had other dreams, but he lost them under the

pressure of academic success. The main goal of schooling became entrance to college, then social success. This full-fledged faith in academic achievement, which drives their schooling processes, results from academic cliquism pervasive in this society (K.-M. Lee, 2007).

High-accomplishing students from higher-income groups tend to accept this reality much earlier and to follow the designated path. Parents convey their social and educational experiences to their children and provide an appropriate environment for academic success. For example, they can afford to rent apartments in privileged areas and to pay for quality private academies. For English, they sent their children abroad or managed their kids' lessons. On the contrary, while high-achieving students from lower-income groups understand success through education, they are not sufficiently provided with financial and academic support. They understood that their scores somehow determined their future after graduation, but they did not necessarily understand how to take action or set goals. The score became the index to their future and its guide force. Thus, they dream of high test scores and admission to good universities.

Participants are aware that one's alma mater determines one's social status in Korean society. They keep up with university rankings in Seoul. Interestingly, all universities are included on the list, ranked from the top to the bottom, beginning with SKY. The fact students follow such rankings shows their awareness of academic hierarchy. Nonetheless, some do not think that their participation in this existing order proves its rightness. Most understand that society is inevitably constructed in this way; regardless of the many diverse characteristics of each university and department, they are hierarchically measured and ranked. Hansol spoke of this:

> The only purpose of schooling is admission to university. In the past, as you know, a university diploma means you will be successful and prosperous. These days,

> too, it works. I know a few acquaintances that have MA degrees, though not from top universities. They said to me that society is broken and prejudicial towards certain schools. Although they perform their best in certain journalist arenas, others who graduated from better-known universities occupy more successful and higher positions. Their alumni back them up, in an "old boys' network." Which university you graduate from, then, is important.

The awareness of this reality is apparent among all participants. Thus, most participants set their sights on universities, not specific departments or majors. Conflicts can arise between their choice of study and university name value. In addition, students understand that their scores would usually make them compromise their selection. The discourse of school rankings is internalized through schooling practices.

Furthermore, this discourse even affects students' personal judgments. For some, the university name indicates the effort others have made in forming their social identity. Aram said:

> We put a lot of emphasis on the university, particularly SKY. If you graduate from S University, we look up to you and thing that you tried really hard and are a worthwhile person. Without other information, a diploma from S University gives you positive judgments and advantages when you look for a job. For your lifetime, the university name influences your social relations. If you graduate from a local university, this makes you a nonentity due to pre-existing assumptions in your culture. When I meet a person who has a diploma from S University, I also think s/he is amazing, although I try not to think this way (laughing).

Aram acknowledges that universities are clearly hierarchical and that academic credentials result in a stable and well-paid job. The aspiration for an elite university within a distinct hierarchy forms corresponsive social identities. Lee (K.-M. Lee, 2007) states that the same academic hierarchy among universities in Korea that justifies meritocracy in fact reproduces social inequality.

The students in my study aspire to be in the upper stratification of this hierarchical structure of happiness and success. Universities are ranked through the test scores of admitted students, not by their distinctive or unique contributions. Even though each

university has a variety of admission selections, students and parents still consider the CSAT decisive. Admission through any other means is too various to prepare for in advance and is generally limited to a few students. Furthermore, among CAST scores, school assessment, and interview, CSAT determines the great admission ratio for most universities. Students believe that studying for the CSAT, scoring well, and attending good universities gives them more choices and opportunities.

This phenomenon produces a marked number of students who take the CSAT multiple years in order to get into the most select universities. Their goal is not general college entrance but entrance to a few top-tier universities. Every year, surprisingly, two-thirds of Ara High graduates study for next year's CSAT. These students, are called "retakers," have to prepare for the CSAT for one year or more. In the district that includes Ara High and Ara Girls High, the percentage of retakers among high school seniors from 2010 to 2012 was 76 % (Y.-E. Gwon, 2013, March 19). This means that two-thirds of students in the Park District retake the CSAT, a number that looms above that of other districts. Furthermore, the unusual number of retakers in the Park District contributes to the distortion of opportunity structure among different social classes, as discussed in the next chapter. This kind of opportunity cannot be extended to Maru High students, who refrain from retaking due to financial problems.

A college diploma has become a basic necessity. While low achievers tend to study in order to avoid social stigma, high achievers study to have better options. All participants seem to have no choice but to study. Schooling-driven opportunities leave little room for choice. Nari said:

> The main purpose of high school is to perform well and to go to a good university… I have to study hard in order to realize my dream. I am not sure now what I want to do, but if I graduate from a good university, I will have more job prospects…During my high school years, I should achieve the basics for my

> dream. This must be scores and grades…For my dream to come true, studying is critical. High school is a stepping-stone to university, which actually determines social status and career. The importance of university cannot be ignored in Korea…The reason employers considers "university name" so critical is that it indicates people's comprehensive industriousness and ability, formed during the schooling processes. I think that educational backgrounds and university name are the single index for evaluation now.

Nari conceptualizes scores in terms of opportunities. She believes that better scores are likely to give her opportunities to live better and to succeed. The most important reason she studies comes from her awareness of realities where academic ability is the sole determinant. Thus, she studies for specific universities.

The data from interviews also reports that students imagine their future within an academic hierarchy. Bada said, "If you study hard, get a high score, and go to a good university, the possibility to realize your dream gets larger." Participants stake everything on studying. They understand that their future is strictly determined by studying well and attending good universities. Most participants said they do not know what they really want to do, nor do they have the time to even think about it. Thus, the drive to study stands in for knowing what they really want.

In the Korean context, it appears as though students have little resource other than to study. Social punishment for low achievers comes in the form of job discrimination and social contempt. Even higher-class students cannot easily avoid it. Those grounded in financial stability study for social prestige and social relationships, whereas their economic counterparts study so not to fall into poverty. For example, most Ara High students dream to achieve high-prestige jobs within their social networks, and most Maru High students want to have a more stable job than their parents. Thus, Uri says she studies to avoid manual labor by way of a college diploma. Studying is a duty already given to them before schooling. They know, of course, that having to study is one thing and being able to study well is quite another.

Internalizing the Idea of Meritocracy

The data from student interviews has shown that participants make sense of achievement as meritocratic rewards from testing within an academic hierarchy. Although they understand that such measures determine only academic ability they do not question distinction as determined through high-stakes testing. While participants are stressed by the overwhelming focus on academics during schooling, they generally are content with this mechanism, which is understood to enforce academic motivation and individual effort. This section highlights how participants make sense of education in terms of hierarchical achievement and competition. Hierarchical status, supposedly awarded through equal opportunity, is taken for granted in their understandings of achievement, and is further preferred, although it is a system that allows only a few to succeed. Thus, at this point, their interpretations of achievement are not tied to their awareness of different opportunity structures; participants' understandings of opportunity structure will be discussed in Chapter 5. Hierarchical achievement through competition is unquestioned and pervades their understandings of educational achievement.

Participants in my study have experienced different treatment, such as differing expectations from teachers and parents, due to their scores through schooling. They understand that academic achievement constitutes the single ability acknowledged in school. Some express opinions that schooling is contradictory – in reality, only privileging academics while claiming to foster the development of well-rounded individuals. However, others accept "competition" and "hierarchy" as important and inevitable values. Aram said:

> I think academic hierarchy is necessary for students to stay motivated. Then, we encourage high achieving students to achieve more. It is stupid to make everyone

> the same…Anyway, there are students studying hard and those who are not, and people who are capable and those who are not. I think the person who studies hard and is competent should succeed.

As a high-achiever, Aram is invested in distinguishing students according to their effort. This distinction motivates students to study more. In a very real sense, she prefers a hierarchical system of education.

Academic hierarchy can give students a sense of accomplishment and motivation as well as low self-esteem and depression. The academic hierarchy is regarded as rightly rewarding students based on their ability. Further, hierarchy is naturally understood to indicate how much or how diligently one studies. Participants were generally content with the idea of differentiated, effort-based rewards. Hansol too, who expressed anger at the contradictions of the current assessment system, said, "Ultimately, we need to be evaluated. Maintaining a hierarchy is not desirable, but it's necessary…Apparently, students around here and students in the provincial cities differ in terms of academic ability." According to most participants, hierarchy is inevitable in a competitive society. Nari added:

> I am trying to live a better life. Because I live in a society that instigates continuous competition, I think I will succeed through effort...Everyone cannot be at the top in a society. The number at the top is limited. There is the top and the rest. With limited places, a hierarchical structure is inevitable. So, we cannot help but compete...In a competition, there are always those who survive and those who are dismissed. In my school, too, I think students who will live happily number below 1%. Based on the recent news, 20 versus 80 was the past. The reality is that 10 % take up all the wealth.

This statement shows Nari's understanding of the Korean economic reality. She is aware of the distribution of wealth in the society and talked a lot about competition. In actuality, students, parents, and teachers often say that only 4% will be successful in school. They acknowledge that only a few can succeed. Competition justifies social scarcity. Thus, in this case as well, Nari accepts the resulting hierarchy.

Furthermore, high achievers showed a tendency to rationalize hierarchy and competition, identifying their ostensible function as motivating students academically. Bomi said:

> I think competition is necessary. Otherwise, students would waste their time and wander aimlessly. Then they lose sight of the purpose of schooling. It is good to compete so as to get motivated and inspired. I do not like the current overheating competition but it is necessary regardless.

Bomi situates herself as higher-status in the academic hierarchy. She also strongly aspires to be at the highest rank. She is optimistic about the implementation of testing through a competitive hierarchy to some extent, in that it motivates students to study harder. Although she points out that students are stressed by academic competition, she does not think schooling can happen without competition. More broadly, while participants demonstrated anxiety and concern about being left behind and being low achievers, they nevertheless tried to rank in the top in the hierarchy. Words like "competition," "winners," "survival," "hierarchy," "choices," and "efforts" were most often used to articulate their understanding of educational achievement.

In addition to high achievers, low achievers ascribe to the dominant narrative of meritocracy. Therefore, whether they are privileged or not, most participants expressed little antagonism towards their notion that academic achievement is competitive and hierarchical. They recognize the contradictions of an educational system focused on academics. Nonetheless, the idea that effort rightly determines success, and that one's approach to study has direct consequences, prevails. Hierarchy through competition is understood as fair on the basis of meritocracy. Junsoo, a low achiever, said:

> I think I deserve low achievement because of my lack of effort. The grade report frustrates me. However, I can live better than my parents if I put in effort. Currently, I am living miserably but I will strive for a better life through effort.

While Junsoo does not see much promise in his academic future, he is very positive on

the idea of meritocracy. He often complained that competition in school is excessive, but this did not shake his faith in meritocracy.

However, low-achieving participants did not view competitions or survival as favorably as high achievers, and did not often use those words. Participants had a dim understanding that some are already adversely situated for competition. As a low achiever, Taeyang questioned the current meritocratic system:

> A good university, a high-status job, money, and marriage are deeply linked in Korea. My friends often made fun of me, saying that I would marry a pathetic woman in the future because I do not study well. Here, if you study well, you will succeed. If not, you will fail. To be honest, even if you do not study well, if you make an effort towards what you want, you can succeed. However, in reality, the biggest determinant is one's parents. This is the problem. Success depends on your parents' financial power. It means that those without money can do very little.

Taeyang from the upper class, thinks that the system is not meritocratic. In his understanding, money explains class positioning better than effort. The power of money in determining future rewards is very critical to his understanding of social success.

On a larger level, educational policy gives advantages to those with money. The current policy claims to foreground educational autonomy and excellence, but it results in the reinforcement of income-based educational disparity. Since school choice and privatization was privileged by education policies such as the "High School Diversification 300 Project" of the Lee, Myung-bak administration, the achievement gap among high schools has widened, especially between specially-purposed and general high schools. This school policy, whose purpose was to respond to diverse educational needs and to result in more specialized high schools and autonomous private schools, was originally suggested during the 2007 presidential election, and implemented during the Lee, Myung-Bak administration based on their discourse of pragmatism, competition, and efficiency (Yang, Jeon, & Lee, 2008).

The subsequent Park, Geun-Hye administration called for its repeal because this project contributed to the reinforcement of high school hierarchies and the ghettoization of general high schools (Um, 2013, April 11). The achievement rankings of general high schools fell dramatically. This was largely due to the fact that general schools cannot single out high-accomplishing students, as do the specialized schools and autonomous private schools, and they take in the largest amount of low-achieving students. In contrast, autonomous private schools select students whose achievement level is at the 50th percentile or more and who can afford the high cost of tuition, as well as academic competition through private education. The specialized purpose schools select students who are talented in language (primarily English) and science/math. In the case of English, sufficient fluency in speaking and listening and academic literacy in writing and reading is barely possible to students who have no English preparation through studying abroad or intensive private education. In addition, tuition and other expenses in these schools cost from between twice to seventeen times as much as general high schools (Ahn, 2012, July 18). In reality, school choice is not possible for low-income students, not to mention low achievers. Choice is merely possible for privileged students and schools.

The resulting hierarchy affected students' identity formation. They accept this hierarchy of high schools, and judged themselves according to it. Danbi, attends Maru High, even rationalizes high school rankings play a part in university evaluations, which would be disadvantageous to her own admission applications. She said:

> Unlike a high school in the Park District, Maru High is located in the River District which is underdeveloped. The schools in this district could be nonentities. It is natural for universities to privilege high schools in the Park District. To be honest, the top student in my school and the top of a school in the Park District are quite different in spite of having the same ranking. I understand there are disadvantages resulting from this hierarchy.

The Park District is the district name that stands for economic prosperity and educational

advancement. Danbi accepts the disadvantages what come from attending her high school, on the basis of the logic of a highly competitive society. Internalizing competition and differentiation, she thinks positively about differentiated distribution by merit. This pattern frequently and emphatically emerges when interviewing students who are high achievers or upper-class. Through their efforts, they work to obtain higher status rather than educational achievement for its own sake. In their understandings, irrespective even of their level of awareness of different opportunity structures, achievement is always hierarchical on the basis of comparison and competition.

The discourses of schooling take shape through individual competition, stratifications, and privatization. My interviews indicate that students identify with the academic hierarchy and try to succeed at competitive high-stakes testing, not simply to achieve in a broader sense. They understand studying as means towards opportunities for a better life. Participants, then, think about studying in relation to their futures or dreams, although the main purpose of studying is test-driven. At the same time, they suffer significant academic burdens and stress resulting from competition. They exhibit anxiety over tests, fear of failure, and the possibility of living lives as "losers" in the future. Competition and hierarchy frame students' understanding of achievement and determines their schooling experiences, irrespective of their feelings or educational gains. In this regard, my findings correspond to other scholarship regarding the effects on students of high-stakes testing (Amrein & Berliner, 2002; Au, 2007, 2011).

Testing rhetoric is compatible with narrow individualism. Within this focus, the meaning of ability or competence is ideologically defined (Giroux, 2009). High-stakes testing accommodates students and schools to the competitive accumulation of academic attainment. Test-based meritocracy contributes to an ignorance of structural contradictions and justifies its own results. However, this climate is likely to undermine

schools' missions as learning communities, as well as students' own educational achievement (Gasoi, 2009). Gasoi expresses serious doubts about success and values drawn from high-stakes accountability, which is incompatible with school missions and community values.

The achievement of participants in this study is understood in terms of measurable scores obtained through competition and alienation. In addition, meritocracy justifies the differentiation of losers from winners in school. Participants too, rely on the idea of meritocracy for explaining their current academic and social status. Further, they put a great deal of belief in this idea when thinking about their future. As shown in this section, participants' interpretations of educational achievement are not based on what students achieve through schooling, but on how much more they achieve than others. Hence, the meaning of achievement is narrowly reduced to competitive scores. Without understanding why and what they need to achieve, they tend to strive for scores.

The Experience of Learning: Test Scores as an Alienated, Accumulated Property

The overwhelming focus on academic achievement is likely to suppress participants' identification of other purposes or achievements. As a result, their own understanding of educational achievement is similarly confined to test-based learning. This section highlights their experiences of learning and curriculum under high-stakes testing, and reveals their recognition that academic success differs from learning, and that the pressure of testing have alienated them from learning.

Participants in my study struggled to identify their educational purpose between the dominant discourse of schooling and their educational needs. Academic success through testing frames teaching and learning practices, and even stands in for educational needs. However, even though they study for scores, they did not equate the accumulation

of scores with learning. While they understood that scores stand as virtually the only index for educational achievement, and that scores affect their identify formation, they do not entirely identify with test-based learning. Through their experiences, they recognize the contradictions of test-based learning.

Testing changes teaching styles as well as student learning. The data suggests that testing makes learning boring, repetitive, and passive. Participants had to follow this marked path at the expense of their educational needs. The score, therefore, becomes by-product obtained through the forced fight between desires and needs. Bomi stated:

> I feel like I am learning to take a test. Learning is restricted to Korean Language Arts, English, and math. A lot of students would want to learn others. Teaching practices are also constrained by the textbook. I'd like to learn by doing and by going on field trips rather than through textbook-based technical learning. I want to maintain educational interest but…I like to learn through methods that attract my interest and needs. If that were possible, no student would give up studying.

Bomi seems to have lost her passion for learning, as well as her reason for learning. She is dissatisfied with test-based learning unless it is accompanied by methods to maintain educational interest and to meet her educational needs. She recognizes the contradictions inherent to mechanic learning.

While students strive to test well, they suffer from mechanical learning. High-stakes testing like the CSAT exerts significant costs in terms of the individual and social aspects of education (Jang, 2011; W.-G. Jeong, 2011). Sacrificing academic interest and the diverse purpose of education, it works through social sorting and distributing. In this regard, students accumulate scores in exchange for learning. Not understanding why they are studying, they are pushed to study harder. During this process, they abandon what they need to learn in the first place. Danbi, a high-achiever, said:

> If I made my mind up about my future dream, I would pursue it. However, I do not have a dream and I do not know what to do. I get stressed out, both from having to decide my future path and from studying. The former is about my career

> and future, and the latter is about studying for testing. People around me press me to study and to decide on a path. I don't know where to go.

Danbi clearly distinguishes "studying for testing" from her own educational needs. Identifying her future is entirely separate from studying, under test-based achievement. Hence Danbi's understanding of achievement differentiates between learning and studying.

The students in my study reported that, by the time they entered high school, they recognized that they had to study for testing. College entrance is always prioritized over learning. In terms of recognizing this fact, earlier is, better. Jungsu, a teacher at Ara High, spoke about this reality: "From at least middle school, you have to prepare a college entrance strategy - whether to try for early decision or later, and even choosing the university and department you hope to enter." Your score determines the educational career and path. In a cultural setting where schools push students to study for tests, students' own educational needs disappear. Bori said:

> In my elementary and middle school days, I hated and avoided it when my parents push me to study. Now I understand why they did that. Nonetheless, it would have been better to help me find what I really want to do rather than forcing me to study...In school, too, teachers cram knowledge into our heads rather than enlighten us through knowledge. Teaching by rote does not fit me. This kind of teaching overlooks how students understand what they learned. To some degree, it will be helpful, but to be frank, what we are learning now is useless in the world.

Actually, Bori showed a stronger academic identity than anyone else in the interviews. However, he experiences difficulty in identifying the meaning of what he is doing. He knows that what he is doing does not contribute to his needs. In spite of this dissatisfaction, he has no choice but to participate in the system in order not to be a social "loser."

Learning to the test is a more widespread phenomenon than teaching to the test. Aspirations for academic credentials control schooling practices, particularly high school

under the CSAT. To produce a few winners, all students have to take everything on the test. Uri complained:

> Learning is not autonomous and unconditional. I like sports but I do not know why I have to learn math and English. Why do all students learn in the same way? Schools imprison us. There are a lot of students who just study without needs or goals. It is so boring.

Uri reveals a discontent with learning in the current school system, likening school to prison. She knows she cannot help but follow the established conventions. She senses the contradictions of learning through standardized high-stakes testing.

Uri's learning experience is similar to that of Jiwoo at Ara High. Despite differences in achievement level, their experiences of learning has been quite disappointing. Students are losing interest in learning due to the current schooling practices. Jiwoo said:

> In my elementary school, it was so fun to play with friends and to learn math and other subjects through activities and collaboration. I thought going to school was for learning rather than studying. It was enjoyable. In middle school, teachers were much stricter and study became much more difficult, with more subject matters. In spite of the pressure of studying, I was happy with my friends and with learning. In high school, I feel much more coercion about college preparation and live under pressure from the people surrounding me…For college, it is all about scores. I feel bad about the college entrance system which only values scores rather than knowledge and passion for the major.

Jiwoo realizes that educational achievement is only understood in terms of academic ability and that other aspects of educational achievement, such as social ability and aptitude, are not valued. She had to change her school life pattern in response to academic pressure as the years went on.

In some sense, students are situated in a paradox. They study for their educational purpose which turns out to be subject to the discourse of schooling. Consequently, students gain academic credentials as the alienated ability (DeLissovoy & McLaren, 2003;

Frymer, 2010). Scores explain the mode of existence, as if workers in a factory exist for what they accumulate in an alienated setting (Marx, 1961). Participants described themselves as studying machines. Their studying existed for testing and not learning. The idea of competition determining winners and losers is legitimized by testing.

Under the overwhelming pressure on testing, studying is distinguished from learning. Knowledge that students crave does not exist for enlightenment but for accumulation. They are pushed to cram without understanding how the curriculum is organized or why it is learned. With the focus on classifying students, this kind of assessments does not contribute to curricular interpretation for fostering student learning (Eisner, 1979). The misuse of testing does not result in enhancing learning. Technical practices alienate students, as learning becomes standardized and narrow (Hursh, 2009; McNeil, 2000). High-stakes testing changes the relations between students and education. In the alienated setting of school, through the alienated process of schooling, they are educated to accumulate scores for college admission.

Many participants, particularly low-achieving students, said they hate the main subjects like Korean, English, and math because those subjects occupy most of school time and because they generate difficulties for students' scores. Frustrated by their scores in these subjects, participants become disinterested in learning them. Jiwoo's remarks represent this frustration:

> When I prepare for tests, I get stressed because of scores and the grade report. I am worried about getting poor scores. Originally, I liked Korean and math. However, as years go on, I hate them because I feel like I am studying them to take the CSAT, not for learning. Thus, I prefer arts and P.E. now.

High-stakes testing narrows the curriculum as well as the range of knowledge. The primary criteria determining students' grades are the three main subjects. According to students and parents, English and math determine the level of academic achievement

because these subjects have accumulative impacts on student achievement throughout schooling and comprise a significant part of school grades. Hyuckjoon, a Maru High teacher, confirmed:

> This school has a large portion of students who are below the 20th to 30th percentile. It would be better for them to be oriented towards academic achievement. However, it is not easy for them to study. In particular, they cannot catch up with English and math, which take up most of the class hours and students' GPAs. Math and English are grounded in accumulative effects, which otherwise cause setbacks. Those subjects depend on the economic support of parents.

Hyuckjoon saw that many students with low performance in the main subjects fail in the CSAT and school assessment, because those main subjects – which have cumulative effects, and are supported by private education – determine the consequences. Students from low-income families are excluded from achievement in the main subjects, since they cannot benefit from private education.

Aspiration for academic success and an awareness of the limited influence of effort in mastering these main subjects drives most Korean parents to push their children for "curriculum acceleration" before they go to school, which is widely thought of as conventional and cultural. This indicates that students learn the contents of a certain grade level in advance, before they advance to higher grades. Curriculum acceleration's purpose is to help students score ahead of others in the same grade, and to give them more time to study later. Nari reported that her sister in the sixth grade now studies high school curricula in private institutes. Similarly, Hyeyoung, mother of an Ara High participant, explained:

> Without curriculum acceleration, your child is not allowed to learn at a famous private academy. Usually, from the third grade, children learn the curriculum three years in advance. Among "Gangnam" moms, it's common knowledge that your child must complete high school English during middle school. In this area, including the Park District, there are a lot of students whose English is perfect.

> Thus, if you let your child study English for the CSAT in the high school, it is too late. During high school, your child should devote his or her time to math and others subjects.

The "Gangnam" area consists of a few districts including the Park District, well know for wealth and a high quality of education in Seoul. Hyeyoung makes sense of private education and public school from a very different perspective. She said in her interview that private academies are places for studying for testing, and that schools are places for testing. According to her, this notion is pervasive among Gangnam moms. Thus, for the purpose of getting higher scores than others, curriculum acceleration prevails in this area, especially for families above the middle class. This results from anxiety and a sense of rivalry (Hwang, et al., 2013). Hyeyoung used the example of one student in the third grade, starting to learn middle school curriculum. Of course, the prerequisite is that s/he has already learned the entire elementary curriculum, especially the main subjects, before s/he enters the third grade. Parents compete in order to place their children at the top with curriculum acceleration. They already know English and math are critical for the top.

For all participants, regardless of their achievement level, English and math were main concerns. However, high achievers from the lower classes worry more about these two subjects, because they are less likely to have received support in them since childhood. (This difference is discussed in Chapter 5, in relation to opportunity structure.) Students, parents, and even teachers agree on the power of premier private lessons for English and math. Hyesung, who is at the top level of achievement, said:

> I invested a huge amount of time on math but I felt the limitations of my efforts. It was about intelligence. Without material support, I suspect I could not have achieved up to this level. I've received a lot of help from private lessons. To be frank, I experienced difficulty in raising my math achievement with just the help of school instructions. Without private lessons and financial support, I would be facing more difficulties. Money reduces the difficulty of academic achievement.

Hyesung acknowledges his privilege through private education in academic enrichment.

While he values the importance of effort, he feels effort cannot explain high achievement in English and math. This issue frequently emerged among participants. Aram, who ranks above the 89th percentile, sighed:

> I feel like having innate intelligence is very important. Failure despite great effort, results from incorrect studying or low intelligence. Intelligence is necessary for testing. There are differences in intelligence among us…My challenge is math. I am bad at math. I am stuck at a certain level, even with great effort. Math is not a subject of memorization. My brain does not work for math.

Aram thinks that variables such as money and innate intelligence are important for academic achievement, not to mention effort. Getting high achievement scores in math and English requires more than effort: namely, IQ and the cumulative support of private education.

Based on interviews, participants think that high attainment indicates about students' innate intelligence as well as their effort. They tacitly accept that "studying smarts" speed their attainment, and that economic capital helps. Conception of cleverness and ability under high-stakes testing, in which the main subjects are critical, are constructed around innate intelligence. Ultimately, learning is narrowly defined as the outcome of intelligence and money under test-based achievement. The results impose great responsibility on each individual (Y.-J. Jeong, 2011).

Failure in the high-stakes system affects students' emotional and social identities. Students are not only alienated from educational enrichment, but also face depression in defining themselves. Taeyang said:

> Compared to the high achievers, I consider myself pathetic and hopeless…I was very outgoing and popular in my elementary days…From middle school, it was terrible. It was not easy to catch up and I did not study at all. I caused a lot of trouble for teachers. I got punished a lot, resulting in extra discipline. I was annoyed with myself for not performing well and with teachers who did not understand me…I know my parents and teachers will mock me due to my scores [if I talk about my dream to them]. Everyone slights me.

Taeyang defines himself on the basis of scores. He knows that others judge him by scores. For him, the score seems to indicate whether he deserves happiness or not; his scores represent the entirety of his learning and his being. Attention is paid not to what he achieves through learning, but how much he accumulates. Scores persuade some participants to abandon their educational needs and hoped-for careers. They adjust their goals to suit scores, causing either frustration or happiness. Scores become central to their identity formation.

In addition, scores regulate participants' daily lives and affect their emotions. Without caring about their interests or needs, students wrangle with testing for good grades. Bada addressed this fact:

> I like the subjects I get good scores in and hate the subjects with bad scores. So, I hate math and I like ethics…When I get high scores, I'm happy. In the opposite case, I get stressed out. When students have bad grades, some cry and some say they want to die. I cry in my home.

In spite of this emotional response, Bada was one of the students who strongly believes in the necessity of hierarchy through testing. Almost every month, high-stakes tests are administered throughout students' high school years, either as school assessment or nationwide tests. Jang (2011) explores students' psychological and emotional states in order to reflect students' positions and attitudes after taking the CSAT. Most students divulged anger, stress, depression, feeling burdened, and a sense of futility. Bada's story suggests that this negative effect on emotion is likely to be chronic. According to news articles (W.-Y. Kim, 2012, November 07; Shim, 2012, November 26), the CSAT considerably contributes to adolescent depression.

Hansol, who experienced three years of schooling in the U.K., complains about how the entirety of Korea's teaching and learning practices are adjusted to tests:

> In Korea, there are no distinct features by subject matters. When I learned about

> city distribution in geography class in the U.K., I was very interested in doing geography. We went downtown, made a map, and put it together in order to confirm our theories again reality. But here it is all about memorization. Our earth science teacher urges us to memorize, our chemistry teacher urges us to do so too, and in every other subject - English, math, Korean literature, physics - they all did it. I used to experience other ways of learning. I feel so sad… All students strive to be within the 89th percentile, to gain admission to universities in Seoul. But whether or not they perform at high levels, they all drowse in the classroom. This is not desirable. This is rare in the U.K. I was so surprised to see this. Students drowse so much in the class, while they make such dizzying noises during recess. But whenever class starts, they get so calm. Everyone sleeps. The school has already lost its role.

Hansol is currently preparing to study abroad, because he is bored with this kind of learning. He knows that high schools face extraordinary pressures regarding educational achievement and college entrance. However, he also knows that the current obsession with testing ruins classroom interactions and quality learning practices.

Participants' daily lives are scheduled around test-taking. The days of higher-class students in particular are stringently organized between school and private academies. All participants reported that their high school lives are unhappy because of scores. Failures in high-stakes testing are likely to negate students' dreams and happiness. Thus, they strive for high scores on tests. When they achieve lower grades than others, they blame their own efforts while being confused by their purpose in learning. Achievement means achieving a higher score than others. As such, the results of learning alienate students from their own needs and the learning process in itself (DeLissovoy & McLaren, 2003). Moreover, the highly determining effect of tests on students' futures alters curriculum and instruction, including pedagogical structure. Curricular control as well as pedagogical control distorts the teaching and learning process (Au, 2007; Vogler, 2002).

CONCLUSION

Participants are situated in a context where the push for social success through

schooling is pervasive, and they further attune their own educational needs to it. Over time, their educational needs are replaced by social desires that relate happiness to academic success. Overall, as I have described above, they position themselves in relation to an achievement identity, while some demonstrate struggles and conflict with academically-determined discourses. These struggles are seen in the conflict between their own happiness and social desires, and between succeeding and studying.

The dominant discourse, "education for success and success through education," predominates throughout testing. As a result, participants learn to the test. Scores obtained through high-stakes testing determine their educational career and future. As my data above demonstrates, test-based achievement affects what they are and what they do, in school and even in society. They own scores as rewards for effort in a competition. Through this process, sacrificing their own needs and purposes, they are conditioned by the institutional belief that they hold all the responsibility. For the participants in this study, ideas inherent to testing by and large became prevalent in their understanding of educational achievement. Their awareness of the contradictions of test-based achievement has not led to doubts on the merits of high-stakes testing. They believe high-stakes testing contributes to fair and meritocratic distributions and hierarchies, given equal opportunity. They internalize the inevitable hierarchy and competition, rationalizing them in terms of individual effort. However, these ideas contradict their experiences in an unequal opportunity structure. The next chapter explores participants' experiences and understandings of opportunity structure throughout their schooling within their class status and achievement level. Within a high-stakes testing context, they articulate their opportunities through different narratives.

Chapter 5: Understanding and Experiencing Educational Opportunity

The previous chapter explored how participants make sense of educational achievement within test-based practices, and how they identify with or are at odds with the dominant narrative of achievement. In this chapter, the focus moves to educational opportunity. This chapter illustrates participants' experiences of educational opportunity at diverse socioeconomic levels. Their experiences involve such things as private education, relocation, parental management, and their interpretations of opportunity structure in high-stakes testing environments. This chapter highlights experiences and conceptions within the participant group that contrast with one another. It also lays out their overall conceptions of high-stakes testing in relation to opportunity structure.

I show here that one thing that makes a difference in the participants' experiences in private education and parents' educational practices is social class. Yet when participants interpret their educational achievement, they rarely resort, whatever their social class, to blaming or crediting structural constraints or privileges. Because of high-stakes testing, they have an overlapping idea of equal opportunity in education. This strong belief about testing is not critically related to their awareness of the contradictions of test-based achievement. There is a basic contradiction between the culture of educational opportunity they believe in and the structures they experience. At the same time, they receive different messages from society and construct their own way of understanding the opportunity structure.

CONTRADICTIONS OF OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE IN PRACTICAL EXPERIENCES

Throughout schooling, the participants' lived experiences are influenced by opportunity structure in society. The participants exist in different educational environments, experience different expectations from parents and teachers, follow different plans by parents, and have different access to quality private lessons. They have experienced educational disparities between schools and recognize them as either privileges or disadvantages. They are convinced, however, that educational opportunity is given to them fairly. According to them, big roles in leveling inherent differences are played by schooling and testing. This chapter addresses how students experience different opportunity structures, how they recognize its reality, and how the idea of testing shapes their awareness of opportunity structure.

Participants generally experience educational disparities between the Park District and other districts. In particular, those participants from low socioeconomic backgrounds feel the strain of weak financial support and high expectations. Since they were children, they have as a whole witnessed quite differentiated academic support for the main subjects through private education. Some could choose their school, premier private education, and even neighborhood; some could not.

English Preparation and Study Abroad

The extent of English preparation varied widely according to the participants' class status. It was not the study's intent to have participants who had studied abroad. Nevertheless, among the eight Ara High participants, half had studied abroad. It is not by mere chance that this study contains all lower-class participants wholly lacking in English preparation. These experiences enabled one Ara High low performer to apply to a few universities in Seoul relying only on the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) score, otherwise unavailable through schools' English classes. He reported that

his current grades were not good enough to get into these universities. However, certain departments of these universities allocate a few openings to students having only high TOEIC score, disregarding GPAs or CSAT scores. This student's GPA and CSAT disqualified him from regular admission paths to these universities.

In a context where English and math are believed to be decisive in obtaining good grades in high-stakes testing, prior English lessons stratify students' achievement. One mother, Hyeyoung, who moved to the Park District to brighten her child's future, talked about how successful students are concerning English proficiency.

> By the time we first moved here, my child was confident in the overall academic achievement. However, my child could not compare to the students here, especially, in terms of English. At Nuri Middle School [pseudonym], approximately 20 students in a class leave for overseas country to learn English immediately before vacation starts. It is more than the half of the class. So the school recently gave sanctions, I heard. There are too many students who are excellent at English, so that it is difficult to catch up with them even through a fairly hard effort.

Many students in the Park District enjoy privileged experiences in English, which result in their gaining an advantage in the college entrance strategy as well as assessment. As much as they benefit from privileged English experiences, their low socioeconomic counterparts are not likely to have access to those benefits. Despite being a high achiever in Maru High, Garam struggled in English, and said, "My problem is English. From the middle school, I was poor at it due to a lack of basics. Even now, I do not have the solution to study English." Garam studies without private education, relying on free Internet CSAT lectures from the Educational Broad System (EBS). Danbi, who ranks in the 98th percentile at her school, also disclosed, "I am not good at English and my pronunciation is awful. English is a heavy burden to me." On the mock CSAT, her English grade ranked the third grade (the 77th percentile).

Learning English in a foreign country offers different opportunities in education

(Y. Lee, 2008). In her study on high school students' spatial gaps in overseas experiences, Lee considered that these experiences serve as cultural capital depending on the parents' economic backgrounds, which further reinforces unequal opportunities. My study shows, for example, that English gives another opportunity to one participant applying to overseas universities and to one low achieving participant applying to universities in Seoul. This phenomenon directly reveals how English impacts achievement, responding to opportunity structure. Lee (Y. Lee, 2008) found that the upper class gets an edge through the help of cultural and economic capital which engender differential educational opportunities. Thus, social class gives rise to varying English performances; it opens or closes doors to private English education, study abroad experience, and English education in early childhood.

Financial Costs and Resources

Financial considerations affect participants' decisions concerning private education, private universities, and retaking the CSAT. When they select a target university, one thing that all participants keep in mind is their overall scores. Another factor for Maru High students is the tuition. According to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology in 2012, the average tuition nationwide for universities was $6,096 a year. For private school it was $6,702 and for public it was $3,772 (Higher Education in Korea, retrieved from www.academyinfo.go.kr). Garam from Maru High aims to get into a public university in Seoul. If he fails, he will go to a local national or public university because of the tuition burden of private schools. Bori, Dasom, Junsoo, and Uri in Maru High are in the same situation. Their counterparts at Ara High never raised the issue of tuition.

As shown in the previous chapter, so as to increase their chances of getting into

elite universities, senior students commonly study for a few years or more to retake the CSAT. If they fail, Ara High participants take this option for granted. However, Maru High participants consistently said they want to avoid taking that course of action. Bori said, "If I failed, I would work part time to earn money and go to the military. Thereafter, I think I would prepare for university or find a job." Junsoo said, "If I failed in 2-year colleges, I would work part time and enter the military." Whereas Ara High students tend to apply for universities that require scores higher than their achievement level, students worrying about the cost of tuition do the opposite to avoid failure. On average, two-thirds of high school graduates in the Park District become re-takers to enter top-tier universities. The teacher Jungsu explained:

> Like other schools in the Park District, 400 students among 600 Ara High graduates study one year or more after graduation. This is due in some cases to failure, but in more cases to gain admission to better universities…This year, in a class of 45 students, 8-10 students enter SKY and the next three universities.

What Jungsu says here is in line with a recent news article about the unusually high number of re-takers in the Park District. About two-thirds of graduates in the Park District were reported to retake the CSAT from 2010 to 2012(Y.-E. Gwon, 2013, March 19). Most re-takers rely on private education. It should go without saying that preparing to re-take the test costs a lot of money. Hence, retaking increases the disparity in the educational expenses between different socioeconomic groups.

Maru High participants feel constrained by the price of education. The gap in private education expenses between groups continually widens. One Ara High participant in one month spent $1,363 for one subject, while one Maru High participant spent $545 for all the subjects. The climate of private education in each district is differentiable. Hyeyoung, the mother of a student at Ara High was specific:

> To learn from a popular instructor, it costs about $1,363 to $1,818 a month for

> math only. It is a small size of the tutoring for the top achievers. To be frank, I cannot afford it. I spent $1,363 for all the main subjects for my child. A mother I know borrowed up to a few ten thousand dollars without notifying her husband. It is the investment for private education.

Her account reveals how much mothers spend money in private education and how education for the main subjects is privatized. Generally, parents and children consider that where they learn math and English is from private academies, not from school. Also, this phenomenon is universal in the Park District. There is a volume of research that insists that material conditions influence student achievement in tests and at gaining admission to top-tier colleges in Korea (Hur, Shin, & Jung, 2012; J.-Y. Kim, 2011; M.-R. Kim, 2004; M. H. Shin, 2010). Responding to the economic structure, private education contributes to the reinforcement of educational inequality at the high school level.

By contrast, a mother, Taesun, of a student at Maru High said:

> I cannot afford the big money of private education. My maximum is probably $545 a month. In fact, I don't want to support private education even with the help of a loan. It is impossible for my household financial situation. My child also understands this.

She budgets for private education and it is supposed that other Maru participants are in similar conditions; they also said they were reluctant to seek private education.

Among the seven, five Maru High participants did not learn from private academies, saying they had not benefitted from private education and could not afford it, while all the Ara High participants studied at academies. Uri from Mari High explained:

> I went to private institutes when I was an 8th grader. It was not a big help. To be honest, my parents could not afford it. So, I quit it and said I could study by myself. In my home, my dad is the only paid worker and we have a low income. So I feel bad to ask my parents to get me private education.

Uri had been little exposed to private education since her childhood. In a situation where private education demands big investments and makes a difference in academic achievement, the students from affluent families are more likely to harvest its benefits.

The privatization of education tacitly organizes an educational environment where there is little quality education without money. This is not to say that money guarantees achievement but it highlights how impoverished students are deprived opportunities.

The mock CSAT is administered nationwide as a way for students to prepare for the real CSAT. Thus students' scores are graded on a national scale on the basis of norms. The teacher Jungsu said, "In a class at Ara High, 13 to 15 students get a grade of first-class in English and math. That is an amazing number. These two subjects are supposed to be strongly influenced by private education from childhood." In a class at Maru High in contrast, according to the teacher Hyuckjoon, none or perhaps one student achieve a grade of first-class in English and math.

All Ara High participants claimed to have never worried about money, saying their parents offered unlimited support through private education for their academic achievement. Class structure affects educational attainment and entails different educational opportunities. The reality is that premium private education provides yet another educational opportunity; we might say that the upper social classes live free of worry about money and that their lower socioeconomic counterparts live free of a good education. Ara High participants may experience class privileges, but they frequently speak of the significance of in individual effort in educational achievement. They believe that decisive hard work overcomes structural barriers.

Six of the eight Ara High participants moved to the Park District and its better private tutoring market for educational excellence. Moving into the Park District requires a huge financial commitment to cover the rent or purchase of an apartment. This is not a matter of individual will or effort. The average apartment sale price in Seoul is \$4,500/m^2 in February of 2013 (The Real Estate 114, retrieved from www.r114.com). The average for the Park District is \$7,890/m^2. The average for the River District is \$2,981/m^2. In the

Park District, buying an $85m^2$ ($915ft^2$) size apartment, a common size for a 4-person household, costs on average $670,727. The rent, of course, is proportional to the sale price.

Academic attainment in testing can actually reflect where students live (Youn & Kang, 2008). Youn and Kang (2008) discovered a "residence effect" in the admission rate at high-ranking universities in Seoul. In particular, they pointed out the prominent phenomenon of families having school-aged children migrating to educationally specialized districts. The Park District is well known for a variety of premier private academies catering for CSAT preparation and elite universities admission. When the authors controlled the effect of both income and academic achievement, they found out that place significantly affected students' admission to top-10 universities. In addition to the quality of private education and the school climate in privileged districts, they concluded another influence to be the mothers' managerial role in parenting practices. The establishment of these practices is likely to be grounded in a family's financial might.

Parents' Expectations

Ultimately, relocation, private tutoring, and prior English experience are closely linked to parents' socioeconomic status and related expectations of their children. They provide educational settings with their children from the earlier days on the basis of private education and school choice. Parental plans include sending their kids to foreign countries, relocating them to the Park District, and/or selecting elite schools and premier private academies. Since preschool or earlier, students have grown up in organizations of private education with prestigious instructors to gain an advantage in pursing acceptance at top universities and jobs at prestigious companies. Hansol said:

My mother told me to study hard in order to get the best score and this is the

> precondition of my happiness. She said her ultimate goal is my happiness. Then I argued that I could live happily with my current score, so I do not know why mom scolds me for my grade. I know, of course, I need to raise it. At that time, my mom warned me that for me to be happy, the path is like this. You must follow this because I know what works for you. I felt bad but…It should be obvious that my mom is right because she experienced the same thing.

Hansol's mom seems determined to provide Hansol a premier education. As a preschooler, Hansol lived abroad. To preserve what he learned of English in those years, he kept up his English literacy through private education during his elementary years in Korea. He was again immersed in English for three years thanks to his father's work. Thereafter, their family moved to the Park District to send him to Ara High.

In both student and parent interviews, Ara High parents were shown to exert strong leadership in guiding their children. Their guidance based on their privileged social position is associated with students' achievement, goals, and further understandings of social realities. Hansol explains how he chose his dream for a future:

> At first, I decided what to do in the future like this. In Korea, to a child whose achievement is high, moms enumerate jobs: prosecutor, lawyer, doctor, businessman, international attorney, and accountant. In my case, I had at least one reason I dislike each. Then lastly my mom suggested economics. I had no particular reason to reject economics. Since that time, my dream has been to become an expert on economics.

Hansol's mom guided him to an appropriate job suitable for his score and her expectations. In Ara High participant interviews moms' leadership roles in educational decisions appear often. For example, Hyeyoung insisted that her child become a lawyer despite her child's reluctance. Occasionally parents lead their child more gently into the academic environment. Hyesung, a high performer with middle-class parents remarked:

> Generally, my parents respect my opinion. There is surely a time when I need my parents' help. My father did not enter the university that he really wanted due to a bad physical condition on the test day. Even if he graduated from a top-tier university, he wants me to get into the university he wanted to attend. So, he wants me to consider top university names rather than thinking about my major.

> My mother respects my father's position and expects me to have a professional job…When I am frustrated with my scores, they plan a trip for my refreshment and support my inner maturity. They give me strength to endure this entire long process of high school life.

Many parents' transfer to their children their own aspirations for attending elite universities. In addition, family activities and decisions are centered around their children's education.

High achievers and the higher class students experience parents' aspiration early on - in elementary or middle school. Their parents optimize educational settings for competition. Before middle school, parents relocate to a better place with better opportunities of private education and for access to a prestigious school. Or they might send their children to foreign countries or to English immersion preschools and kindergartens. Hyesung said:

> From my childhood, my mother really made an effort for me to form a study habit and environment. In my earlier elementary school, my priority was to obey my parents' guidance. At that time, rather than from my own will for studying, my parents organized the environment and I lived up to it. In the upper elementary school, because I had no apparent goal, I decided to study. I thought that if I gained a high score, I would have more possibilities for jobs. Thus, my priority is to study hard.

Hyesung believes in the promise of the school. In addition, he is confident that his success through schooling will serve as a stepping stone. Since his earlier days, his parents' guidance has affected his academic identity.

The middle-class parents are well acquainted with how the educational system and society operate. They are achievement-oriented and financially secure, which leads to their enhancing their children's education. Hyeyoung said:

> In Korea, school alumni and regionalism have a big impact on getting a good job. At first, I was concerned that Ara High had a lot of high-performing students. But my friends said I should send my kid here even if my kid comes in last. It is because this school takes pride in successful alumni (laughing). My child has not

> formed an identity yet about what to do and what to desire. However, it is helpful for my child to compete with high performers. I hope my kid gets a high wage job as a result of scores. Then my kid would be privileged in society. I always persuade my kid to be a lawyer. My kid hates the idea and worries about the competence. I talked to my kid, don't lose the confidence.

Hyeyoung was optimistic about an academically hierarchical society and determined to make her child a success. Her type of guidance was typical of other Gangnam moms. She continued:

> Kids are being steered by moms. Around here, there live a lot of CEOs, professors, doctors, and lawyers. For example, fathers who are doctors want to bequeath their hospitals to their kids, and lawyers hope their kids become lawyers. Although kids are not interested, mothers force them to follow the path.

Upper-class parents know what jobs lead to success and how to get those in the occupational structure. They have a tendency to guide their children to move up society's hierarchy. Of course, they have plenty of financial and informational resources. Their resources go beyond the school. They actively obtain information from private institutes and social networks, and lead children to good universities. These strategies resemble those described by Lareau (2003), who examined differences between the parenting practices of middle- and working-class parents on the basis of varying levels of cultural and social capital. These middle-class parents have resources and knowledge to "customize" their children's future catering to institutional and social virtues. Lareau's (2003) study revealed different cultural practices by class status. In my study, class status positions children in different educational plans led by parents on the basis of financial resources and distinct social experiences.

Through parent and student interviews, higher-class moms exhibited a trust in private education and lower-class moms trust in their children in accordance with their educational philosophy or with realistic limitations. Taesun, a mother at Maru High, disclosed difficulties:

> It is so hard to have good information about education policy. Some moms are very quick to catch useful information. I know this is a bad excuse, but working moms like me cannot afford to do that. I feel sorry for not helping my kid with college entrance.

In fact, Taesun was unaware of the details of her child's grades. She said she trusts her child and values an autonomous and voluntary learning. However, this kind of parenting somewhat contradicts her child's requests on practical, useful guidance for college entrance and a career. In the interview data, all high achievers among Maru High participants said that their parents fell short of their urgent needs for appropriate strategies and information.

The data drawn from student interviews showed that at Maru High the overall parents' plans of college entrance lacked both detail and clarity compared to their Ara High counterparts. Most Maru High participants hungered for knowledge and information about college entrance strategy. Garam said, "I feel there is a lack of information. My mother knows nothing about college entrance. She does not even show an interest in my achievement." Danbi said, "My parents vaguely encourage me to study hard rather than guiding me specifically. They feel contented when I am just studying in my room. My mom is not that interested in my studying. She trusts me and does not interfere." Considered from student interview, parents were alike in their hope that their children live happy and comfortable with a stable job. However, their visions, plans and ability to play were differentiated according to socioeconomic backgrounds. Class status leads to the construction of different aspirations and expectations for educational development (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999; M. H. Shin, 2010). Moreover, current schools do not seem to meet both needs from each social class. Hence, higher-class parents are inclined to get more from private academies while lower-class parents are more inclined to entrust college entrance to the school and their children.

COMMONSENSICAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURE

Participants respond to their privileges or disadvantages to education produced through financing and parenting, as I have described above. Beyond these practical experiences, however, what I found across cases was a strong emphasis on equal opportunity and culture. Regardless of social class and academic achievement, this justification of equal opportunity prevails in their awareness. While participants have experienced opportunities in education through economic structure, their understandings or interpretations of opportunities were highly very individual. In other words, their experiences resulting from social class status was not inextricably linked to their understandings of achievement and related opportunity. This phenomenon was common and overlapping. A gap is found between their experiences and understandings of opportunity in education. Their practical experiences of opportunity structure contradict their understandings of it under high-stakes testing. This finding echoes Gramsci's (1971) notion that hegemonic commonsense is a contradictory combination that draws at once from domains of meaning and practicality.

Participants have experienced educational disparities among classes and schools. Especially, participants from Maru High felt resources and a quality educational environment were lacking. Their Ara High counterparts lived by different daily patterns and within a distinct structure. Maru High participants were aware of disadvantages resulting from educational settings and financial situations, and Ara High participants recognized their privileges obtained through financial resources. However, all participants demonstrated a strong tendency to posit another factor in the priority. They knew they lived in a different structure but believed that opportunity in education was given equally to all social classes. It seems that their understanding of equal opportunity eclipses their

awareness of privilege or disadvantage from structure. Their belief in individual effort and reward was so pervasive as to justify contradictions from structure. The nationwide, standardized testing, supposedly as objective and fair, plays a role in forming this kind of belief and value. Thus, this section presents how participants make sense of opportunity structure in education and how participants' beliefs echo the equality of opportunity. The section namely addresses common understandings of opportunity among participants and their responses to different opportunity experiences.

Rationalizing Disparities in Educational Opportunity

Participants generally accepted the necessity of academic hierarchy through competition because they thought society operated that way. They said that a hierarchical society was a given and inevitable, and, accordingly, contradictions within the hierarchy were everywhere. High-achieving and higher-class participants displayed a preference for such a hierarchy. Aram, an upper class high achiever said:

> Some might think it is unfair. But it depends on how you think about it. As students have less resources and support, they might study harder. Students in this area [Gangnam] might not have a desperate desire. Students in another area, dreaming desperately, would study hard and could realize their dream. You don't need to think it is unfair. That's the way it goes.

According to Aram, as much as some may be disadvantaged by the unequal structure, they should find other advantages to compensate for that deficiency. She assumes that society is already unequal, and making up for that depends on individual effort. She was one student in particular unwilling to talk about the contradictions of opportunity in education. She emphasized that more important thing than knowing contradictions was to make an effort.

Gaon who stayed in a foreign country in North America for two years said, "I had

a good opportunity. But I think it is fair. Students, who do not have an opportunity like me, also have their own benefits." In explaining contradictory experiences, participants frequently used the words "natural" and "inevitable." The issue of unequal structure is diluted with other problems. Unique experiences lived through different social statuses were not prevalent in recognizing contradictions of society. Likewise, Bori, from a lower-class background, said:

> Of course, achievement disparities widen because students in that area [Gangnam] get much more private education and support. However, those students, too, have stress about college admission and the same concerns that we all have in this age.

Bori did not focus on class issues resulting from unequal structure. Rather, he minimized inequality by illuminating general concerns of high school students. The focal point in recognizing realities was not on contradictions. This is not to say that the students failed to recognize structural constraints. They utilized a mechanism of justifications about the status quo. It appears that in their understanding the achievement gap is not closely related to the opportunity gap. Thus, this contradictory pattern emerged of justifying achievement over the actual experience of constraints.

Regardless of participants' class status, the most glaring example is to mention "outliers" when they talk about structural constraints. Hyesung said, "According to TV interviews of students who place first or second on the CSAT, they mostly study alone without private education in local cities." Similarly, Bada said,

> Living in the Park District having quality private education, and going to Ara High helps me with achievement. It is true, but in TV shows, I witnessed students living poor in a local province and studying hard to enter a good university in spite of bad environment.

Bada highlights exemplary students of success who overcame structural barriers. Danbi from Maru High returned to the similar idea Bada showed. Danbi added:

> To be honest, I felt unfairness among schools and classes. But in fact, even

> students living in a local city can enter Seoul National University. Efforts give rewards. Even if you think it is unequal, our circumstances are inevitable. There is nothing to do except to study hard.

Bada and Danbi are oriented with achievement and success. Outliers are used to confirm the legitimacy of efforts. Equal opportunity through education and individual hard work has been conveying a hopeful message to her. Students aspire to be positioned in a higher status and tend to identify with outliers for survival and success. Or they choose to invest in the achievement ideology as a result of student agency. They know there are no paths except for academic success in a situation where other opportunities are blocked.

As to students' identification with the dominant narrative of academic success, numerous studies have attempted to explain how working-class students and students of color are strongly oriented with achievement. In MacLeod's (2008) study, some working-class students showed a strong academic identity for upward mobility through education. Perry (2003) observed Black students' optimism towards academic success as one response to structural inequality. Likewise, Lundy (2003) interpreted the active embracing of the achievement ideology as exerting agency for Black students' racial identity and culture. Their accommodation of the dominant discourse is distinct from assimilation (Akom, 2003). These studies regard academic identity as student agency to resist against racism prevalent in society. In addition, students receive a hopeful message from the achievement ideology, not to be oppressed. Similarly, in my study, participants hoped to realize their success through the achievement ideology and accordingly identify with the dominant narrative. In some sense, they recognized this is an only option for them. As to academic success, this study, in a later section, discusses further the diverse and nuanced attitudes expressed according to students' social classes and achievement levels.

As indicated in the prior section, some students in this study understood that

given factors like money, as well as efforts made a difference in achievement. Regarding the former, they found it unavoidable. Hence, they turned to strong beliefs on the latter. At the same time, the already firmly constructed belief that, if you work hard, you can make it, blinded them to structural barriers. Consequently, participants interpreted achievement in an individual sense without relating it to opportunity structure. Throughout the data, a strong pattern emerged across cases, of attributing even structural issues to individual efforts.

Every low-performing participant at some point in interviews blamed him-or herself for a lack of effort, and for the consequential low achievement. On the other hand, high-performing students showed a firm belief in meritocratic rewards for their efforts. In this way, they reduced advantages, primarily mediated by structure, to their individual efforts. A high-achieving student, Garam, talked at length about the contradictions of learning under high-stakes testing, said:

> I think Gangbook area is relatively educationally deteriorated. I am feeling that. However, I do not think it is unfair. Useful information and educational passion that those in Gangnam area have is the result of their efforts. It is a matter of individuals. Even, in Gangbook, you can seek information if you have educational passion. It depends on individual differences.

Garam knows his area is disadvantaged in terms of education. However, he relies more on a strong cultural belief that individual effort makes a difference in students' lives. He holds this message from home, school, and society that effort lays the groundwork for success, and failure is due to laziness. This belief in equal opportunity in education and the individual fault in failure was observed by McQuillan (1998) who studied an underprivileged urban high school. According to his study, students never questioned the equality of educational opportunity despite witnessing low teacher expectations and a less demanding curriculum; they interpreted achievement as an individual matter. The

overarching ideology of equal opportunity hinders their awareness of structural constraints around their situations.

Often, this cultural belief at the macro level became fixed through students' observations at the micro level. For example, Hyesung said, "It is a difference of will. Low-performing friends around me are mostly explained away by lacking will, not by educational environment. That is from my lived experience." Micro personal experiences are offered as evidence of big cultural ideas. Such experiences provide the logic to explain social contradictions. Bori, a lower class, high-performing student, said:

> Effort is critical in achievement. Even if you get a lot of private education, but you make no effort, it is of no use. Some students in Maru High study hard, but most do not. They deserve low achievement. My school is in low achievement because students do not make an effort…The effects of private education are not in complete control. Students who cannot avail themselves of private education can sufficiently catch up with the help of EBS free CSAT lectures and through their own efforts.

Bori connects the low achievement of his school to his observation that most students put forth little effort. At this point, achievement is critically linked to individual effort.

In some sense, some students have nothing but their own efforts, which explains why effort is salient in their understanding of achievement. They held that efforts produce outcomes that reflect how much they studied. They live in an age in which the result evaluates the process and people around them are interested in results. How students strive and struggle through highly competitive schooling is often overlooked by people around them, even though they experience these struggles themselves.

In competitive achievement, little attention is paid to students' situations and their struggles. One Maru High participant confessed that when he had difficulties in academic achievement from the elementary school, nobody helped him, not even his family. Another Maru High participant, who wants to get a better job than her parents, talked

about hopeless embarrassment in academic achievement. An upper class, low achiever is not different. Taeyang said, “It is not that I hate studying, but that I have difficulties in catching up. However, my parents insist that if you study hard, you can make it.” Consequently, these students, as did the people around them, ascribed low achievement to themselves. Low achievement in spite of great efforts is not recognized or is explained by wrong efforts. Nari said:

> Achievement depends on efforts. Even if private education provides good materials, the ultimate responsibility lies on you and your efforts. Nonetheless, if you had gotten bad grades, your way of efforts might have been wrong or you must not have studied really harder than others. You have to work so hard to overcome the barrier.

According to Nari, effort is the master key to explaining student achievement. If students have low scores, they must have made no effort; they did it wrong; they were lazier than others; or they did not accumulate efforts from their childhood. Their evaluation always takes place through comparisons and competitions, particularly through testing. The next section deals with how testing plays an ideological role in participants’ beliefs about equal opportunity, in spite of their understandings of the contradictions that high-stakes testing gives rise to in educational achievement.

The Test, an Equal Opportunity Given to All!

In Chapter 4, participants pointed out contradictions from test-based learning practices. High-stakes testing gives them contradictory ideas about achievement as well as the biggest stress. Whereas they recognize the limitations and contradictions of the CSAT in measuring the schooling process, all believed strongly in testing, particularly the CSAT, asserting its quality of equal opportunity and fairness. Furthermore, despite their practical experiences of different opportunities mediated by structure in education, a

belief pervaded the participant interviews that testing represented equal opportunity. Thus, high-stakes testing functioned in two arenas: ideas and practice. This section illustrates that testing plays a role in participants' awareness of contradictions in educational achievement, yet testing also works ideologically to defend the dominant system. That means testing appears to serve the notion of equality of educational opportunity in spite of contradictions in achievement. Hence, this section focuses on how participants understand testing as an equal opportunity.

Since their early years, participants in this study have experienced achievement through competitive tests. Achievement is measured by scores and their relative ranking. Within the nine-grade scale, students are expected to earn different grades according to their merits through testing. Rewards are given to students only through testing. Testing is the mechanism to sanctify students' ability and success. Participants' interpretations of testing are paradoxical. On one hand, their educational achievement is hurt by testing; on the other hand, their achievement is singly legitimized by testing. Nari said:

> I like taking a test. I like the purpose and meaning of testing. It is to evaluate ability. It is about how much and how well students understand contents. It makes us progress and check our problems…In the competition for getting limited resources, the CSAT makes it fair for every student.

Nari prefers the CSAT as a fair and objective measurement. The good sense of testing for evaluative distribution is often used to rationalize the consequent hierarchy. For Nari, the CSAT gives rewards to students according to their ability and effort making the process legitimate. This justifies the notion that testing is suitable for competition.

Most participants mentioned the necessity of testing to evaluate abilities of a multitude of students. Further, they advocated hierarchical distribution through testing. Garam asserted:

> I would not like it without testing. Through tests, we can evaluate ourselves. This

> is the best way. Of course, too much, like in Korea, is bad. Anyway, in order to evaluate what students learned, tests are the easiest and most accurate method…In Korea, the high grade in the CSAT makes students eligible for college admission. Especially, the CSAT is a test for academic hierarchy among 600,000 students. It seems fair. Poor students can also apply for it.

The irony here is that Garam's advocacy of testing rhetoric seems to be compatible with his commentary on problems of the CSAT that demand useless and massive amounts of knowledge. He trusts the procedure as well as good sense of testing.

Participants are generally inclined to prefer the standardized and nationwide assessment. Standardization appeals to objectivity and fairness. Students seem relieved when they take the same test and they are stratified depending on its results. Bomi said, "Now, all we can equally learn. The knowledge we learn are the same. It is the difference of how we effectively input it into the head. The same textbook, knowledge and curriculum, and the same test." The high-stakes test accords with her request for meritocratic distribution. In the inevitable competition, the CSAT provides a supposedly open opportunity to all, regardless region or class. The resulting hierarchy is acceptable because without it students look the same. A single test assures her that students are being evaluated on the basis of the same criteria.

The logic of equal opportunity by testing and distribution through testing is remarkable in students' understanding of equal opportunity. During the process, it explicitly and implicitly dilutes structural issues. According to the paradigm of meritocratic distribution on the basis of no bias against social backgrounds, testing appeals to all participants' conception of equal opportunity, although it delivers great consequences. They get familiar with competitive achievement through academic hierarchy and they feel secure in the supposed fairness and objectivity of the testing. Accordingly, students can bear high stakes. However, the degree to which the high stakes affect student stress and anxiety over the long term is still unknown (Nichols & Berliner,

2007). Nonetheless, acceptance of testing as a means of ensuring equality pertains to ideological discourses of testing, which outwardly appeal to achievement, success, and equality, but actually camouflage the pervasiveness of educational alienation and inequality of educational opportunities (Apple, 2006; Lipman, 2004; Noddings, 2004). In addition, any educational disparity is laid at the feet of the individual (Hursh, 2007).

All participants trust the CSAT more than school assessment. Whereas school assessments are different in their levels of difficulty, the CSAT is trustworthy and objective due to its being administered nationally. Paradoxically, the point that this test is applied to all makes it feel fair. The national administration of standardized high-stakes tests entails fairness to students and parents. They advocate testing as justifiable rewards for effort and ability.

In this way, the test appears to make them line up single file nationally. However, because they are disadvantaged in private education, Maru High participants are unable to compete. The achievement gap, as indicated earlier, is huge. For example, an Ara High participant whose achievement level is in the 70th percentile in school assessment will score the same grade on the mock CSAT as a Maru High participant whose achievement level is in the 96th percentile. The disparity between the two schools was tremendous. None of the Maru High participants felt competent on the CSAT. There are two types of entrance decision periods, the earlier and the regular. During the earlier period, students apply to universities using a combination of GPA, interview, and essay test. For the regular period, generally, universities allocate great weight to the CSAT. Dasom talked about her plan:

> First of all, I should put everything into the earlier period because I am not confident in the CSAT. Of course, I have to take the CSAT due to the admission condition of the minimum grades for universities. Among the various strategies of the earlier decision, I should choose the appropriate one. Anyway, I will target the

> earlier decision. In the regular decision, the CSAT is decisive and there are too many high performers.

Dasom's plan was typical of other Maru High students. She was the highest performer in the school. They seemed deprived of another chance at the CSAT. They refused to try the regular decision because they were incapable of scoring well on the CSAT. Thus, the high stakes are given more to Maru High participants who are reluctant to use both decisions.

But while participants such as Dasom acknowledged the harmful impacts of high-stakes testing on educational achievement, they still valued the fairness, objectivity, opportunity, and meritocratic rewards that it entailed. High-stakes testing is largely understood as the main paradigm of meritocratic distribution. Outwardly, it gives equal opportunity and equal high stakes to all, regardless background or position. While they are aware of its problems, they find it legitimate. In the participants' understanding of the opportunity structure, high-stakes testing bridged the gap between their experience with the inconsistent structure and a common sense understanding of equal opportunity. Moreover, high-stakes testing engages students in the success ideology and achievement identity formation. The next section highlights nuanced understandings among students of different social and academic backgrounds, and differentiated interpretations across participants with regard to schooling discourses formed around achievement and success.

CONTRADICTORY EXPERIENCES AND DIFFERENT UNDERSTANDINGS ACROSS CLASSES AND ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

Participants' achievement level and social class made a difference in how they understood society and experienced high-stakes testing. Gender was less salient in their recognition of educational achievement. Interestingly, the research data never exposed gender-based differences in student understandings. Even so, it makes little sense to assert that gender has no impact on student understandings and experiences in education.

This study focuses on participants' interpretations of achievement and opportunity in a high-stakes testing environment; perhaps because of this gender effects in socialization and educational outcomes failed to emerge in the interview data. In this study, the overwhelming focus on achievement through testing appears to not involve gender issues.

Hence, this section explores how participants in each social class and achievement level respond differently to achievement and opportunity. Chapter 4 highlighted more overlapping ideas of achievement across different backgrounds. The previous section illustrated the differences of experiences in educational opportunities and the commonality despite that of their beliefs that testing represented equal opportunity. This section shifts the focus to differences in participants' understandings of achievement and opportunity at the intersection of class and achievement levels. As I describe here, they showed somewhat distinct ideas of opportunity, schooling, and society, and they received varying messages according to their backgrounds. Participants' struggles and distance from the narrative of status attainment through schooling are distinguished by their social backgrounds and achievement levels. Upper class high achievers tend to invest more actively in academic success to gain social success. They are acquainted with how schooling and society work together to construct social capital. By contrast, low achievers were sometimes dubious about the promise of school, holding onto a fear of being failures in society. Lower class participants received the message, via their parents' experiences, about the discriminative nature of occupations without academic credentials.

In addition to varying support from home, such as private education and informational resources, students were subject to different expectations from teachers and parents, according to their achievement and class status. Maru High participants felt discouraged by their teachers. Furthermore, parents' societal experiences directly and tacitly conveyed different messages to their children. Some parents worked at lower level

jobs, and others delivered successful and encouraging stories to their children.

Working-Class Understandings

Maru High participants generally believed that testing was an equal opportunity in education. In addition, most of them identified with the achievement ideology that shaped one's academic identity. Some of them, however, questioned the inequality of opportunity inherent in the economic structure and hierarchical system. In addition, some appeared conflicted about the achievement discourse where equal opportunity is assumed, questioning the opportunity structure.

Uri is aiming to get into a university or a 2-year college because she frequently heard that life would be tough without at least a bachelor's degree. Due to the high tuition of private universities, Uri wanted to go to a public or national university.

> The system of Korea considers the privileged too much. Thus, no wonder, the rich children succeed and the others stay at the current level. Although the latter study to death, their chances of getting into good universities are low…In this system, to study for universities given no student autonomy is the first priority in school. It forces all to study in order to succeed. I hate it.

Although Uri struggles to survive in this system, she recognizes the unequal distribution of opportunities by social class. To her, the system is contradictory; all students are pushed to study, but only the privileged students seem likely to succeed. Her awareness of the different opportunities in the system shown above is not necessarily tied to her belief that testing is an equal opportunity.

Junsoo knows that he cannot even compete. Since being in middle school, he has struggled at school due to academic and financial problems. In high school, he was denied a last opportunity for vocational training. He does not want to go to school and does not even consider college. Academic discourse is not his priority.

> I want to be an actor. But I could not tell to my parents that I really wanted to do it. I cannot afford it [the action academy or agency]. I do not have the money or time because I have to work part time…I have not had opportunities in my life. I would like to live in a better house. Isn't it comfortable? Then I would not need to work right now. My parents still want me to go to college. I like my teacher saying that I can make it if I make an effort. If I have to attend a college, maybe I want to go to a college in Seoul. But I don't know.

The schooling discourse that a few high achievers qualify for seems distant for Junsoo. He recognizes that he was given no opportunity. Nonetheless, he blames himself for wasting his earlier schooling. He conforms to the schooling ideology to the least degree. He knows that without academic credentials he will not be treated favorably in society. However, he has already acknowledged he cannot succeed through education in Korea's academically hierarchical society and at the same time he struggles to survive in this climate. He continued:

> Teachers say, "Study hard, then, be a successful person when you grow up." However, this account does not touch my heart in any deep sense. I don't think studying well guarantees success. With other things, I will be able to earn money…School does not help me succeed. Without teaching how to make a living or how to buy a house, the school always just says only studying, good universities, and success. I do not think so. I think I do not need school.

Junsoo said he often felt a sense of powerlessness in schools and classrooms. In the classroom, he crosses his arms, just doodles in a textbook or dozes off. He goes to school but does not understand why. Of course, he tries to study but he does not find any meaning or strategy for schooling, aside from graduating from it. Even though he does not overlook the significance of effort in achievement, he rejects conforming to the schooling discourse.

In contrast, for low class high achievers, studying appears to be the only option. They identify with the achievement ideology for social mobility; after all, they recognize they lack resources in their homes. They should get into universities to obtain a stable job. This choice is based on their awareness of social realities. The paradox is that they own

an academic identity while being aware of the social contradictions within the academic hierarchy. Bori recognizes that this system does not serve other students with other purposes:

> The biggest purpose is to gain admission to a university. Except for that, I don't think about other purposes. In Korea, people go to school for fear of social consequences. This is the system where all invest in college preparation. There are a lot of friends who want to do other things rather than universities. School does not help them. For example, one of my friends wants to be a health trainer; another wants to be a career soldier, and others [want to be other things]. For them, a college degree is not required. But under this system, they helplessly waste their time.

Bori chooses to identify with the achievement ideology at the expense of other purposes, but he seems to know that school loses its own mission. Regardless of their believing in the promise of school, most participants were skeptical of schooling dominated by tests and competition, which makes them further doubt the meaning of educational achievement. Interestingly, while participants in my study recognized the limitations of test-based achievement, they believed in the high-stakes testing system as an equal, fair opportunity. A gap seems to separate their between awareness of the contradictions of learning practices led by high-stakes testing and their beliefs about high-stakes testing being an equal educational opportunity.

In addition to participants' awareness of the distortion of schooling, some understood that they were situated differently through schooling under the hierarchy of schools. Maru High's academic environment seems to fail to meet the needs of high performers as well as those of low performers. Danbi complained:

> In a good school, teachers push students more to study and students study hard accordingly. In a bad school, students are swept away by a non-academic atmosphere. No private education. No passion for education... I think my school deprived me of the potential for furthering achievement. If I had attended another school, I would have studied harder. Although I did not do my best, my scores were good enough here. The easy achievement level of school becomes an

obstacle to my progress.

In fact, this academic environment that Danbi complains of is a partial result of recent educational policies, like High School Diversification 300 Project (2008). This policy allows specific private schools to select students whose achievement level is above the 50th percentile. Students below the 50th percentile and those above who went unselected go to general high schools like Maru High.

Low teacher expectations impact participants' understanding of opportunity. A high performer, Danbi doubts her achievement because she knows it would compare poorly to the high achievements of students at privileged schools. Moreover, the teachers' warnings to her school as a whole only discourse her:

> My school underachieves. So, teachers constantly tell you that you should go to college using school GPA. I know my school does not perform very highly. However, teachers always telling us that we will go to college in ranks lower than we hope discourage me and hurt my heart. They seem to instill this kind of idea.

Teachers at Maru High might be painting a realistic picture for the students. Perhaps they are trying to motivate students by showing them where they are situated. However, this practice seems to affect students' confidence in their achievement and success, and to construct a certain group identity. Bori, who is in the top 10%, was ashamed of calling himself a high achiever because he considers students at his school studying rather lackadaisically:

> I do not know what teachers expect of me. I have not felt it. Considering from teachers in my school, since they are not able to care for all students, they support prospective students and let others who give up studying fall behind. In the class, for example, the teacher tries to help around 15 students who listen in class and leaves the others on their own.

Bori has observed many students get left behind. When schooling centers around the accumulation of knowledge for testing, it necessarily arises that schools neglect low performing students. Through this practice, as Fine (1991) described, some students

getting low expectations construct their identity accordingly.

Furthermore, lower class students have learned a good deal from their parents' lived experiences with low income or of having no academic credentials (M. H. Shin, 2010; Willis, 1977). This says nothing about parents' general aspirations to educate their children. They want their children, through education, to attend a good university and succeed. The children receive, however, distinct messages through circumstances and experiences they have gone through. Junsoo said:

> My family seems to belong to the lower class. My dad lives separately in another city where he works, and my mom also works. My mom said, however, the income does not meet our living expenses. She asked me if I could pay for a cell phone plan and give some money to my brother. Of course, she is concerned about my working part time and wants me to quit it. Nonetheless…

At some point Junsoo defines success as having a house and a car. Financial concerns occupy his priority over other educational needs. He decided, at some point, to make money for the near future. Academic discourse is somewhat distant from his reality. He wants to find a way out of poverty, but schooling is not the path.

Parents' experiences regarding the academic discrimination prevailing over society send a clear message to their children. Uri, self-identified as lower class, wants to enter college and get a better job.

> Neither of my parents have a college diploma. They told me to surely enter college and whether I study well or not, I should go to college. Otherwise, I would undergo difficulties. They talked about bias. Because they did not get highly educated, they suffered from prejudice. They said, "Get highly educated, and do not live like us." My parents have a good relationship and are happy, but their work is not easy because it is manual labor. I would like to have a better job through a college degree.

Uri believes that her parents are badly treated because of their low-level of education. Parents' experiences related to academic discrimination and labor market affect her academic identity. Similarly, Danbi, one of the high achievers at Maru High, identifies

with academic discourse due to her father's getting laid off. He wants her to unconditionally select a department having a high employment rate. Maru High participants are more likely to experience realities associated with the bottom of the economic structure, such as layoffs, low income, or discrimination. Hence, their future dreams are considerably oriented with stability and security. Rather than dreaming of being a high-salaried professional, they tend to aim for merely a stable job. Class status limits students' aspirations (MacLeod, 2008) and varying levels of quality of education reproduce educational disparities (Wiggan, 2007).

These stories show how economies land students in schools with disadvantages and how economic stress reduces aspirations, support, and even effort (Anyon, 2005). The economic structure affects Maru High parents' educational practices. A high achiever, Dasom said, "I primarily seek out information. My parents seem to have no information. Probably, my mom has no place to get information." In addition, Bomi said, "Mainly I hang around for information. My dad knows less than me even though he is a teacher. I get information by myself." This is not to say that Maru High parents are not interested in education. As Lareau (2003) described, working class parents might have different beliefs in educating their children. Maru High parents are likely to be bound to structural barriers in educating their children under the high-stakes testing environment. In addition, these barriers seem to affect their expectations and lower children's aspirations.

Students from the lower class have more chances to experience lack of privileges (M. H. Shin, 2010; Willis, 1977). They know that society is stratified by class status and opportunities are given accordingly. Especially lower class high achievers are more inclined to have an academic identity since they believe in education for social mobility. Although they hold the overarching idea of hard work, they apparently experience opportunities dissimilar to the upper class. By contrast, low achievers are convinced they

cannot succeed in such a system where so few succeed in climbing up the steep academic hierarchy. Thus, they might refuse to embrace the close relationship between studying and succeeding, although they remain in the system out of fear of social discrimination.

Overall, participants from the lower class believe in effort for achievement. On one hand, some question whether the system really works for them. Some lay bare the distance between academic achievement and success. They consider economic boundaries in choosing future jobs and universities. Thus, their future dream is primarily related to a stable job rather than upward social mobility. Regardless of their achievement levels, they seem to feel some boundaries have been carved into their lives. When they undergo financial problems or struggle with the opportunity structure, they might accept the distance between social success and their realities. Social contradictions from structure and culture are embedded in their lives. However, the structural inequalities they experienced are not believed to affect their achievement. On the other hand, they all believe strongly in testing as a meritocratic distribution based on effort. Since rejecting the achievement ideology means failures in the system, the achievement ideology seems to provide the last opportunity for them to not be failures. They tend to study for social mobility, rather than the privilege of the elite. Thus, they cannot entirely reject the idea of the dominant discourse.

Upper-Class Understandings

Looking at their own experience, participants from Ara High acknowledge the structural impacts on education through private education and privileged schools. Nevertheless, they attribute, ultimately, the educational outcomes to individual industry or indolence. They are convinced that, through testing, opportunity is given equally to all. The privileges they enjoy are not considered an aspect of educational opportunities. Thus,

their understandings of opportunity structure are in line with their beliefs about hard work and effort and with their preferences for hierarchy. During interviews, they never questioned the opportunity structure that inheres in education. Their overall idea that opportunity structure does not considerably impact achievement overlaps that of their lower class counterparts. However, the groups differ considerably in their awareness and justifications of structural contradictions.

Aram, a high achiever, believes in social mobility through education within the academic hierarchy and thinks it works well.

> I believe in a correlation between schooling, working, and succeeding. Of course, there are exceptions, but graduation from good universities is helpful for obtaining jobs. The most apparent way to social mobility is through education. In a highly competitive society, education is the safest and the most definite way.

Aram thinks educational opportunities are given equally through testing. In addition, she is very confident about this competition. She noted the impact of structure on opportunity in education concerning private education and residential places they choose. However, she resorts to the notion of hard work in one's studies is how structural constraints are overcome. Aram's understanding of the achievement ideology is representative of other Ara High participants.

This belief often emerges when participants relate class status to efforts and hard work. Gaon from the Park District said:

> I am proud of living in Gangnam. I can speak out confidently where I live. Since my early years, I have heard it like this. Maybe, the place I live demonstrates richness. If I lived in a rundown district like Gangbook, I would have been lazy about achievement. I know students who do not study are everywhere. But in other districts, there are more bad students. Some do sniff glue. It is much more severe. I was shocked. Here, students take responsibility for their lives. Families authentically support them.

He offers here a stereotypical concept of class. It reveals how he interprets social class in

relation to effort. Furthermore, class is deeply involved with academic achievement, contributing to a class stereotype. Jiwoo, of upper class parents said:

> I heard that there are many students living in Gangbook who do not have the will to study and have crooked minds because their parents have a tough life. Despite me not being the kind of person who studies so hard, the climate of this area [the Park District] encourages me to study hard. If I lived in Gangbook, I would not study because friends would lure me into not studying and to just play instead.

Jiwoo appears to allude to the structural issue with regard to academic achievement, but she reveals some class stereotypes about lower income students living in Gangbook. On the whole, participants strongly believed that given equal opportunity, lack of effort results in failure. They tend to look at achievement individually rather than structurally. Thus, in a society where academic success is presumed to be directly linked to economic success, students from lower income groups get stigmatized as being lazy.

My findings in this regard echo earlier research. Brantlinger's (2007) analysis revealed class-based stereotypes related to inferiority in narratives of youths and parents from the upper class. In her interviews, upper class families inferred lower class status stemmed from deficiency and a lack of aspirations; they overlooked structural disparities in education and believed strongly in the meritocratic nature of education. Spencer and Castano (2007) analyzed that prevalent stereotypes regarding low SES and poverty psychologically affected the academic ability of students from the relevant group. In addition, social class and the related stereotypes are used to justify the status quo and the fairness of a system. Consequently, individuals dilute structural inequality by blaming victims (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005).

Most Ara High participants got help from parents using information and financial resources optimized for the competitive college preparation. Through consulting with private academies and social networks, the parents satisfy their children's requests with

timely private tutoring and academic information. Hyeyoung, a mother at Ara High, said:

> In fact, my family relocated from another district to the Park District for education. In the beginning, I was stressed by other mothers who never informed me of useful resources…Mothers implore "Pig Mom" [a kind of leader mom who is well informed about private education] to give information and buy her coffee or dinner. We observed certain tutors and private academies that sent students to elite universities. So, it is undeniable.

Gangnam mothers, so-called "manager moms," actively engage their children in learning and activities. They even draw a future map and provide appropriate resources from much earlier days.

Students and parents in my study, particularly those from the higher class, trust to private institutes to consult about college entrance. The parents and students who cannot afford to do that are bound by the structural barrier. Jungsu, a teacher at Ara High, emphasizes the importance of parents' informational and material aids:

> The way of college entrance has changed considerably and is now complex. Parents need to be informed about the strategy in advance. At least from middle school, they have to decide which way to go, for earlier decision, regular decision, or for an essay test or interview. Students must prepare for college entrance from middle school. They have to accumulate educational careers and activities. If parents know specific information and prepare for college from that time, then which high school the child goes to doesn't matter. Parents' preparation and information is critical to getting into college.

Information and strategy primarily are in the domain of private academies. Jungsu's account is exactly same as Hyeyoung's, a parent in Ara High. She believes that curriculum acceleration and information through private education determine children's achievement. She believed that, ultimately, genes and money are critical. Thus, she said she distrusts schooling and trusts private education:

> Mothers are mostly powerful. I think the educational passion of these moms is dedicated to the economic growth of Korea. Moms educate children and make them competent. It is undeniable that moms do this. I will tell you about their passion. In order to send their kids to a prestigious private institute or private

> tutoring, they have to wait for years. Even when you are pregnant, you need to reserve a spot for your kid (laugh). I waited for one year to send my kid to math tutoring… Moms never trust teachers and schools. Moms tend to think the school is doing nothing. If you trust teachers, you will fail.

Hyeyoung distrusts the schools. Obtaining private education takes priority over school education. As such, education is indeed privatized and ruled by structure, which widens the achievement gap and opportunity disparities between the classes.

Manager moms' plans and actions which are equipped for competitive academic hierarchy, contribute to the production and reproduction of schooling discourses (S.-J. Park, 2011). Participants from the upper class tend to have less distance between happiness and social success than their lower class counterparts. They dream of more prestigious, highly paid jobs, regarded as successful jobs by society, while their lower class counterparts go to school just hoping for a stable salary. Hansol, who wants to a professional in economics, talked about how upper class high achievers negotiate their career goals in the face of parental impacts:

> My definition of success is to live happily and do what I want. Is that too abstract? For me to be happy, first of all, money (laughs). Everybody wants that. So, I can do whatever I want. To be frank, I do not know what I want to do. I just decided on a career goal because people around me pushed me to do so…One of my friends goes to a specially purposed school but he wants to be a photographer in spite of his top academic achievement. He has an argument everyday with his mom. When asked by his grandmother about what he is going to study in a foreign country, before he can answer, his mom tells the grandma that he is going to be an international lawyer. My friend had a big argument with his mom about why she didn't respect what he wanted…It would be good to have both happiness and money.

Among happiness, academic ability, and success, participants, particularly high-achieving students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds, navigate their dreams and gradually adjust their definition of happiness to success. They were more sensitive to university ranking than were the high achievers at Maru High. They aspired more to live successful lives with social prestige and material conditions.

Whereas all high achievers from Ara High said they want to enter a top-tier university any way they can do (like retaking), all high achievers from Maru High asserted that they would not retake if they failed. Instead, they would lower the quality of their university selection. Ara High participants were more confident about their success than their Maru High counterparts. Even within shared ideas of the achievement and success among different groups, social class affects their aspirations for their concrete future job and career path. While Maru High participants appeared to study for moderate social mobility and stability, Ara High participants studied for social success. Whether they recognized it or not, social class contributed to educational disparities.

Hence, the boundaries which were found in Maru High participants were not noticeable in higher income students' understanding of society. Instead, an interesting feature came across in their interviews. They showed a unique understanding of how society operates. Interestingly, most Ara High participants appreciated how in obtaining a prestigious, successful job an important role is played by personal connections or social networks constructed through region and school clique. This knowledge prevailed in Ara High participants' understanding of society. When they relocated from a suburb to the Park District, Hansol's parents told him, "Make good companions at this prestigious school." Their advice suggests that personal connections at this school might give him future advantages. Traditionally, there have been many successful people from this school. The next criterion mentioned for success to effort was "luck." When asked again, participants said this represented personal connections and lines resulting from school cliques, kinship, and regionalism. Such a criterion overlaps achievement levels. High-achieving Nari said, "Continuing efforts are necessary and furthermore, schools and regions work at making a success." Some participants heard from their parents who experienced personal ties as a crucial factor in their social lives. According to them, the

prestigious universities provide alumni power to exert a strong influence on their job and marriage. Low achievers were, too, aware of this. For example, Gaon said:

> Personal connections and money are required to move to a higher status. This is the good luck. You need to be in a good line. Without supports from the surrounding person, efforts alone are not easy to make it. Luck through a personal bond seems to exist in Korea, as regionalism and school ties do.

Gaon appears to view this feature as a function of the system, rather than contradiction. Upper class participants seemed to be well aware of how society, particularly its upper levels, works. Therefore, their parents progressively take action to move upward. Their relocation prior to their children's middle school or high bespeaks this aspect. Relocation results from considerations of educational quality and social networks.

Parents' societal experiences and financial resources affect their understandings of society and their decisions regarding their the future paths (M. H. Shin, 2010). Students from lower class backgrounds are likely to receive social warnings flowing from the bottom of economic structure in relation to occupational biases and discrimination. Meanwhile, their upper class counterparts understand society operates to privilege people who have good lines or networks constructed through an academic hierarchy. They are actively engaged in academic achievement to obtain these kinds of social networks. They seldom question the system itself and they respond to how the system works. The overall acceptance of the achievement ideology, regardless of social class and achievement level, is apparent, but their purposes are different; in their focus on achievement, lower class participants strive for social stability; upper class participants study for social success. For the former, the achievement through hard work seems like their only option. Class backgrounds and achievement levels affect how high school students understand, as well as experience, the opportunity structure in a high-stakes testing environment.

CONCLUSION

Each participant recognized that society urged him/her to study harder than his/her peers and to not be a failure in the competition. They also knew that universities are obviously hierarchical and play a large role in distributing in a highly competitive market human resources to the economy (G.-S. Lee, 2011). Given the situation that testing is supposed to provide an equal opportunity to all, the belief in upward social mobility through education is common to their understandings of the opportunity structure. However, their way of appreciating schooling and accepting the dominant narrative is differentiated depending on their class- and achievement-related experiences.

According to participants' experiences, it was apparent that structure had differential impacts on supporting their academic environment and leading to their achievement. Yet it also emerged that their understandings of the opportunity structure did not square with their experiences. The rhetoric of testing bridges this paradox. Most participants accepted high-stakes testing as an opportunity for equality to all. The emphasis on academic development through testing played a big role in interpreting achievement individually, rationalizing consequences, spreading the achievement ideology, and producing class-based stereotypes. It is historically believed that the tests provide a fair opportunity for rewards (Chang, 2011; Kang, 2007). That is why testing is commonly used in almost every arena, including admission, employment, certification, qualification, and so on. In this way, these students' experiences of opportunity structure are not inextricably linked to their understandings of equal opportunity. Thus, educational opportunities experienced through structure are reduced to individual interpretations of achievement.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Implications

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This dissertation explores the meanings of educational achievement and the opportunity structure of high school students operating in Korea's high-stakes testing environment. Focusing on both structural and cultural analysis of high-stakes testing, this study intends to show how students construct their understandings of achievement and educational opportunity as it evolves within the larger context of a specific economic structure and a certain milieu of cultural beliefs. The research on achievement under high-stakes testing has so far given less attention to students' lived experiences. Wiggan (2007) argues that "Students are researchers from within, and they should share with professional researchers from outside the duties of framing and interpreting social life" (p. 324). Prior studies on achievement focused on areas other than the contradictions and meanings of achievement through students' voices. This study aims to provide a qualitative interpretation of student achievement based on students' experiences and stories.

Participants in this study were strongly driven by the ideology of happiness and success, an ideology that regulates their educational practices and daily lives. As I described in Chapter 4, an ideological formation of success frames their understandings of happiness and academic identity. They choose to arrange their happiness to fit social desires over time. Overall, academic achievement appears to replace educational achievement and students' own needs through schooling. Some strive for higher status in the hierarchy and some struggle to not be failures and thereby avoid social discrimination and harsh treatment. They are ever aware of the social stigma imposed on low achievers.

During this process, some revealed conflicts in relation to the social formation of happiness and others negotiated a meaning between happiness and success.

Furthermore, I found that their educational purposes were explicitly and implicitly influenced by the discourses of academic hierarchy. The association among academic credentials, jobs, income, and social success persists in students' understandings of educational achievement. Scores are believed to certify students' social status in the future, affecting identity formation, and having emotional and psychological impacts. By means of their accumulated scores, students are divided into winners and losers. Generally, the few students able to get into top-tier universities become successes in hierarchies of school and society. This academic capital contributes to obtaining economic and social capital. During this process, they internalize aspects of the rhetoric of hierarchy such as free choice, competition, meritocracy, and the survival of the fittest. The academic hierarchy is taken for granted; educational inequality is overlooked as an inevitable by-product of competition. The schooling discourse is constructed around narrowed, competitive, academic attainments through high-stakes testing. Accordingly, participants choose to invest their effort in educational achievement.

My investigation also revealed, however, that participants recognize to some degree the contradictions of testing and its overwhelming governance over learning practices. Thus, many of them do not regard the accumulation of scores as learning. In this regard, high-stakes testing causes contradictory practices which overturn the process of learning. Under the pervasive system of achievement through testing, they face the paradox that school is where their alienated learning takes place, and at the same time school is the only place where students' ability is legitimized by scores as property. In contrast to their awareness of the contradictions and their conflicts with test-based practices, however, they construct a strong belief in testing as a fair and objective

paradigm to distribute rewards by efforts and abilities. The trite adage, "If you work hard, you can succeed," keeps students signed into an academic identity and operates to blame, in cases of failures, students' efforts. The nationally-administered standardized test (CSAT) gives students a sense of security that they are evaluated under an objective criterion. While educational achievement is closely linked to the idea of happiness and success under high-stakes testing, participants are alienated from their own educational needs and learning. Although participants generally identify with the discourse of academic hierarchy, they experience contradictory processes of learning as well as the contradictions of educational achievement throughout schooling.

Furthermore, as shown in Chapter 5, participants experience academic achievement within different opportunity structures. They seemed to know whether they were privileged or disadvantaged by class-based practices or by where they lived. These different opportunity structures affect student academic achievement and the resulting achievement gap produces class-based stereotypes. Social class makes a difference in students' educational practices: English preparation through private education and studying abroad, math and English private educational costs, admission strategies and information gathered via private academies, and parents' initiatives (e.g., relocation and expectations) in planning their children's educational environment. Students' experiences of opportunity are marked differently by their socioeconomic backgrounds. However, the hackneyed language of hard work that pervades schooling practices tends to hinder their critical reflection on contradictions of opportunity structure in education. Moreover, the belief based on this language gives them hope concerning their success and intervenes in their structural interpretations of achievement.

Practical experience tells these participants that they are hierarchically positioned in structure. This position affects their achievement and accumulation. However, the term

"opportunity" is used contradictorily; it is construed as equality in order to justify the unequal structure. Testing in this case suggests the idea of the equal opportunity in education and the success ideology which legitimizes effort and identity, obscuring structural barriers to achievement. For these students, achievement through testing in fact is deeply influenced by unequal structure, and yet simultaneously testing stands for equality and opportunity, leveling social backgrounds. This research reveals the gap between students' understandings and experiences of the opportunity structure. When high-stakes testing is perceived as fair and as representing equal opportunity, students seem to turn a blind eye to this gap. While students experience the impact of money, the pervasive cultural and historical discourse of effort and meritocracy explains almost all the consequences in academic success. To sum up, high-stakes testing exposes students to the contradictions of educational achievement that school education emphasizes. At the same time, students believe testing presents an equal opportunity to achieve success.

In the collective consciousness of Koreans, academic success (through competition) is associated with economic prosperity – for the individual and society. Most participants, particularly the high achieving and the upper class students, strongly invest in academic attainment. Others are compelled to invest for fear of social stigma. Participants navigate their educational achievement and struggle between their needs and social desires. During this process, a few participants refused to embrace the promise of school. The school fails to serve their educational needs, privileging instead high achievement in testing; for them, the school is merely where one obtains a diploma.

Students' recognition of the contradictions of test-based achievement does not necessarily make them doubt the testing system. That they are aware of the contradictions and still believe in testing as equal opportunity is an apparent paradox. In this way, participants showed, across achievement levels and socioeconomic backgrounds, slightly

different understandings of educational achievement and opportunity.

Lower-class students, who witness the discriminatory economic position their parents are in, understand that the opportunity structure is hierarchical. Thus, high achievers from the lower class are inclined to have an academic identity oriented to social stability, believing achievement through effort is the only chance they have. Upper-class students hold that, in addition to individual ability, society operates through personal connections constructed at school. Rather than seeing this as a contradiction of the system, they tend to think it is an unavoidable function. While upper-class students strive for the hierarchy's pinnacle, their lower-class counterparts struggle to avoid social stigma. They are motivated differently in terms of academic achievement and situated differently in educational opportunity. Parents' social experiences related to academic achievement and occupational success affect their decisions about students' future academic careers. For lower-class students, social class constrains their educational aspirations as well as their parents' expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has attempted to interpret educational achievement and opportunity structure in a high-stakes testing environment through students' voices and experiences. The students in this study seemed to have little choice but to identify with achievement, which during the process of schooling is alienating. Despite their contrasting experiences of educational opportunities, their interpretations of achievement are not connected to structural barriers but rather confined to the discourse offered by testing. This section discusses how testing contributes to forming students' beliefs about equality of educational opportunity in spite of their experiences within the opportunity structure, and how the findings are related to the research on student achievement in the

current literature as well.

The Dominant Narrative of Success is Deeply Ingrained in Consciousness

Across groups, the interview data suggests that educational achievement implicates success through competitive excellence – the meaning of which is confined to academic success under social pressure. Participants seems to be unable to construct their own idea of educational achievement under the social formation of desires in the neoliberal context of education (Y.-J. Jeong, 2011). Their educational needs and conceptions of achievement disappear over time and are adjusted to test-based success. For them, the meaning of happiness is dictated by the standardized, universalized desire for success, which society tacitly and overtly frames (Marcuse, 1964). Here students sought happiness in scoring highest while losing autonomy over their educational lives. Test-based achievement preconditions students' educational purpose. Their purposes are imposed on them by a society obsessed with measuring success through test scores. Marcuse (1964) called the drive to fulfill such purposes "false needs" or "repressive satisfaction." The process of identification with academic success is similar to how technical rationality in advanced society normalizes false consciousness as against the free ownership of desires. People in a society where all value is transformed into material value by technical rationality pursue a standardized happiness through their controlled desires. Likewise, students' ultimate desires are under social control through schooling, particularly testing. Academic hierarchy accompanied by occupational preferences and wealth becomes desires designated by society. Desire becomes a form of social domination.

The ideology of educational clique-ism holds that the school one graduates from determines one's social status. This is because people with diplomas from particular

universities enjoy privileges and exclusive power. Such educational clique-ism was evident among participants' understandings of educational achievement. Thus, knowing neither what they study nor why, these students strove to get into particular prestigious universities. This ideology tends to conceal in fact that academic success is associated with such factors as class. Whereas it ostensibly advocates "education for success" and "success through education," this ideology contributes to class reproduction as well as distorting the meaning of achievement (Chang, 2011; M.-R. Kim, 2004). The appeal of this ideology is that it underscores individual effort and hard work as integral to academic excellence. However, this ideology functions to obscure the fact that; social capital, like alumni connections constructed through academic capitals, in fact plays a critical role in achieving social success in Korea (K.-M. Lee, 2007). Academic capital in turn is cultivated on the basis of economic capital in the context of the privatization of education (S.-J. Park, 2011). This study's upper-class participants embraced an ideology of meritocracy, but they recognized the critical power of social capital. The achievement ideology conceals how in reality society operates, thus promoting particular interests (Kincheloe, 2004).

In school where the notion of being a success or a failure is directly linked to academic achievement, lower-class students are burdened with class-based stereotypes and social stigma. Some students strive to succeed in high-stakes testing to avoid this stigma. For them, "losers" are characterized by low income, poverty, and manual labor with no security. Constructed class stereotypes may work against the academic achievement of certain groups. Spencer and Castano (2007) showed that a socially constructed socioeconomic identity actually affects students' performances in standardized testing due to stereotype-threat effects. Stereotype threat theory argues that when a society holds a salient prejudice in terms of race and gender regarding a group's

academic abilities it affects that group's confidence in their performance as well as their actual achievement (Steele, 1997, 2003). This theory pays attention to the function of social identity in student achievement. Spencer and Castano (2007) applied this theory to the issue of class in education because they thought that "socioeconomic status is not a widely discussed topic in America" (p. 423). In fact, they found that clas-based stereotypes affect achievement. Thus, achievement needs to be discussed together with the issue of class inequality. In reality, however, class effects are easily reduced in ideological terms to individual hard work (Anyon, 2011).

It appears that in Korea, too, achievement is portrayed in terms of "classless" explanations. Participants' understandings of achievement and opportunity structure confirmed this phenomenon. They seldom connected achievement to opportunity structure in education. Moreover, in spite of their different experiences of educational opportunities, their beliefs regarding equal opportunity were firm enough to blind them to structural barriers. Negative stereotypes hang over low-socioeconomic groups causing them to be perceived as not putting forth the proper effort. Interview data shows that even lower class students share such perceptions. In school, students do not know what to pursue for their future, but know only that they must take the designated path. The 'mantra of studying hard' alerts them to social warnings that if they don't they will suffer a social stigma. Thus ideology, in explaining educational achievement, emphasizes *classlessness*, but this ideology entails *classism* in explaining the consequences of achievement. While achievement through individual effort regardless of social and economic background is foregrounded by this discourse, the social stigma of underachievement is attached to the lower class, reproducing class stereotypes.

Lee (G.-S. Lee, 2011) notes that the restructuring of the economic context in Korea compels students to identify with the success ideology. One of the contexts is

neoliberal competitiveness and another is the lingering economic recession manifested in reorganizations, layoffs, high unemployment rates, and increasing temporary positions. Therefore, in a time of uncertainty in the labor market, students are terrified by the idea, that "It is the end when they are academically left behind" (p. 23). As a result, academic competition is formidable. Students only identify with the success ideology which allows just a few to succeed. Lee argues that:

> The suggestion that "You can win" as an exception, and in other words, the identification with a very small number of winners leads students to obey the system. For instance, even students placing within the 80th percentile in middle school dream of the SKY universities which permit only students in the 98th percentile. The identification frame is so strong that it makes students even from the 70th percentile to the 30thpercentile stay in hopeless competition (p. 21).

Lee thinks that the change of structure in society and the identification with success accelerates competition in education. In addition, the fear of being behind and being losers in the market shapes students' educational purpose. Hence, the reason why the achievement ideology is dominant in participants' consciousness is that it relates achievement to material affluence and, more precisely, it drives students into a corner, using class stereotypes. Many participants in my study also adopt an academic identity oriented to competition for social success and fear of failure. The strong academic identity most participants showed revealed, on one hand, society's ideological push for market-driven educational success, and on the other hand their desperate reactions to hopeless competition.

The Cultural Construction of Opportunity Structure under High-Stakes Testing

Opportunity structure is not often captured in participants' understandings of achievement. Their experiences of achievement under high-stakes testing are not linked to issues resulting from the opportunity structure, since such experiences are primarily

interpreted as individual matters. In this way, educational opportunities are unequally constructed by policies and parents' practices within the inequality of economic and educational structures.

The national High School Diversification 300 Project (2008) enhanced support for specially purposed high schools and autonomous private high schools and contributed to the ghettoization of the general-ordinary high school, which is "an aggregate for low-achievers" (Y.-E. Gwon, Song, Song, & Kim, 2013, April 03). Further, under neoliberal education policy and the neoliberal economic context, general-ordinary high schools, particularly those in lower-class neighborhoods like Maru High, are under the double stress of low achievement and unequal financial access to private education. Depending on students' socioeconomic status, their educational opportunities are differentiated. One newspaper article reported that many students who were not "chosen" by a school wasted their time in schools where only the top 20% competed for college entrance (Y.-E. Gwon, et al., 2013, April 03). Another article confirmed through surveys among teachers that general-ordinary high schools, as a result of this policy, were in the crisis (J.-E. Kim, 2013, April 03). This policy ultimately privileges private schools, reinforces the achievement gap between general schools and privileged schools, and produces a discourse focusing on the incompetence of public schools (C.-G. Kim, 2009).

In this context of inequality, on the one hand, upper-class students in the research data recognized that their class privileges support academic achievement. Their families could afford to move to privileged areas to facilitate their academic attainment. The contrasting places where students live represent how cities are economically segregated in housing and schooling. Privileged locations possess plentiful resources to meet social and educational needs (Dreier, Mollenkopf, & Swanstrom, 2004; Orfield, 2002). Students in these locations have access to premier private education that excels at strategic

preparation for college entrance and the CSAT. Furthermore, they benefit from their experience of studying abroad for English and from the English immersion kindergarten.

On the other hand, their economic counterparts tend to study independently, relying heavily on the school. Most Maru High participants always take money into consideration. For example, they refrained from asking for private education and they primarily target public or national universities. They cannot, in case of failure, even afford to retake the CSAT. The cost of private education is tremendous. Low-socioeconomic students struggled to even obtain information from private academies or from their parents. They reported that high quality information is available only from expensive private academies. In addition, they did not fully use the two decisions of college admission because their CSAT scores were not competitive despite their being high-achievers in their school.

In a study of the educational practices of Gangnam mothers under neoliberalism, one middle-class mom said, "In order for their children to study well, mom's strategic information and dad's financial strength are more critical than the child's ability" (S.-J. Park, 2011, p. 57). It has often been found, throughout the entire data from students' experiences on educational opportunity in this dissertation, that economic capital is converted into cultural capital or at least economic capital can help accumulate cultural capital, which is effective for testing. Hence, as others have also described, it is certainly not chance that determines participants' residential locations and corresponding opportunities (Brantlinger, 2003; Orfield, 2002). Opportunities in education are organized by and large by the economic structure.

Appearing throughout the data, however, is a gap between participants' experiences and understandings of educational opportunity. Whereas participants' *experiences* in educational opportunities are differentiated by their class status, as I have

just described, their *understandings* of opportunity structure are solid enough to make them believe in educational equality. Hence, most participants, regardless of their achievement levels and class status, attribute educational outcomes to hard work and effort. This is not to say that achievement is not influenced by hard work but to say that varying structural issues remain invisible. An achievement ideology like "education for success and success through education" sets the tone for a culture of equal opportunity in education. This can be called ideological because it disguises their lived experiences of contradictions in the opportunity structure and covers them with the language of individual effort (Au, 2012; Carlson, 2006). The achievement frame pays no heed to students' experiences in relation to structural inequalities but rather highlights achievement for success through hard work. Perhaps the ideology convinces students that education is fair and moves them to locate themselves within an unquestioned academic hierarchy (Giroux, 2010). Thus, there is a gap between their experience and the ideology they embrace. An ideological frame for achievement and success keeps students from thinking about the inequality of the opportunity structure in education (Apple, 1996; C.-G. Kim, 2012; G.-S. Lee, 2011). The ideology dilutes inconsistency and contradictions that students have, in practice, experienced.

Bourdieu (2000) claims that the cultures necessary to success are distributed unequally according to social class, though the distribution of cultural capital does not mirror that of economic capital. In particular, academic competence relies on previously accumulated culture that a family appropriates and hands down. This dissertation takes no interest in how cultural capital is transferred in families of different status; instead it confirms that participants from the upper class attain, through private education, accumulated experiences, knowledge, information, and strategy for academic credentials. Economic capital cannot displace the cultural environment of a family but it permits the

augmenting of it through, as shown in Chapter 5, exclusive private education, English immersion education in expensive private kindergartens, and traveling for language training. In particular, in the context of the privatization of education in Korea, money seems to wield substantial power in academic achievement. Educational achievement is deeply involved with changes to the socioeconomic structure of a society (here Korea). My study suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the interaction between the effects of economic and cultural capital in producing class-related patterns of success in school.

Furthermore, families have distinct practices for and expectations of their children's academic success. While upper-class parents actively intervene in their children's future plans through private education and relocation, lower-class parents, faced with financial problems and time issues, tend to trust their children and let them maintain their autonomy. In Lareau's (2003) study of distinct families' educational practices within different social classes, she challenges a common belief concerning upward social mobility through hard work and effort. Arguing that "family practices cohere by social class" (p. 236), she showed that students' social structural position shapes their daily lives as well as locating them in the structural inequality of education. This inequality is invisible in student achievement due to a focus on hard work. The findings from my study reaffirm her insistence on inequality manifested through class-based cultural practices. She also revealed that different cultural logics in education pursued by different social class families result in distinct practices and expectations. My study shows, however, that lower class students and families compromise with educational reality due to structural constraints and economic limitations rather than possessing different values regarding social prestige. They seem to know that this prestige is available only to a few families, those in command of economic capital.

Social class affects parents' aspirations and the practices of their children's education (Brantlinger, 2003; Lareau, 2003) as well as children's aspirations and personal identification with the dominant achievement ideology (MacLeod, 2008; Willis, 1977). In a study of the achievement gap among different social classes, Shin (M. H. Shin, 2010) showed that parents of higher socioeconomic status were actively interested in scores, "good" universities, and "good" jobs; working- and lower-class parents showed little interest in scores and trusted their children's decisions. Shin concluded that different life experiences of academic capital and social mobility lead to differences in practices among parents and to an achievement gap. This dissertation finds similar parenting practices and expectations. Parents shared a discourse of academic hierarchy that was pervasive at the macro level but, recognizing their limited financial resources and educational backgrounds, some parents expressed varying expectations regarding their children's future in their daily lives. Middle-class students, for example, were instilled with more success-oriented practices, which were backed up financially. In contrast, their lower-class counterparts lacked such support and relied not on their parents but on themselves and on school.

In terms of private education, college entrance strategies, and parents' expectations and plans, students' daily experiences with the opportunity structure were unequal according to social class. Interestingly, however, in explaining their educational outcomes, students gave short shrift to social class. Achievement is structurally experienced among students, but it was portrayed individually. Students tended not to connect academic achievement to structural issues (G.-S. Lee, 2011). Apparently, they experience different structural opportunities in education. However, though they sense some inconsistency in their practical experiences, this feeling is overwhelmed by a belief in testing as an equalizing force.

Their understandings of opportunity are incompatible with their experiences of opportunity structure. Furthermore, experiences of opportunity structure in relation to social class are not linked to understandings of opportunity in education. Namely, they seem to feel that structural inequality in society is unconnected to inequality in education. A hegemonic belief in equal opportunity through education prevails over contrary experiences in practice (Apple, 2004). Ideology works in reproducing the belief that structural inequalities can be challenged through education, particularly high-stakes testing (Au, 2009). Testing practices seem to provide a place where this ideology is reproduced.

Probably, this contradiction is partly involved with the prior observation that they are more inclined not to interpret educational achievement in relation to opportunity structure. In addition, the achievement ideology focusing on hard work for success prevails in their definition of educational achievement. Moreover, they seem to use testing to justify their educational outcome as being the result of hard work and effort, emboldening them to claim that equal opportunity is available to all students from any location. Interestingly, as I describe in the next section, the belief in testing and the rhetoric of testing is salient in students' making sense of educational opportunity. Thus, participants' hope for social mobility and social success are compromised by the inconsistency between experience and the ideology they hold, keeping them in the dominant narrative of achievement.

Testing Plays an Ideological Role in Explaining Opportunity Structure

The most paradoxical understanding is evident in the juxtaposition between students' ideas about testing and their practical experiences. In spite of their different experiences and outcomes by social class, students believed in equal opportunity in

education through testing. The rhetoric of testing in this way could be said to play a hegemonic role, defying the contradiction of opportunity structure. Hegemony serves as common sense in justifying the contradiction between the arena of meaning and the world of practice (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci's concept of hegemony is distinct from forcible domination. The former is not imposed but elaborated in the value system in the form of common sense in an unconscious way (Mouffe, 1979). Then, an "ideological unity" is formed between two social groups when the one spontaneously consents to the ideology that primarily serves the dominant group (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 328-329). Apple (1996) calls this an "ideological umbrella" working over different groups. In particular, he insists that "[the] rightest discourse becomes increasingly dominant in the formation of our common sense" (p. 15), which is salient in educational accountability and privatization in the neoliberal context of education. Thus, pillars of ideological common sense such as achievement through individual effort within equal and fair opportunities are produced through testing practices and shared with different groups.

Ironically, when participants in this study made sense of equal opportunity in education they recognized less the class privileges or structural constraints in achievement than individual hard work and effort. The idea of *testing as fairness* bridges a gap between students' understandings and experiences of educational opportunity. For example, even though Maru High participants generally experienced class inequality within the opportunity structure, they interpreted equal opportunity primarily through testing and attributed educational outcomes to individual efforts rather than to structure. Likewise, upper-class participants also regarded testing as a way of giving equal opportunity to all students. Testing as objectivity and equal opportunity has a transformative power to explain contradictory experiences and to frame students' beliefs about equal opportunity. Testing is pervasive in claiming educational equality and in

justifying academic achievement through hierarchy. This is not to say, however, that students are entirely unaware of the contradiction of high-stakes testing and test-based educational practices. Nonetheless, they rely on a rhetoric of testing that emphasizes individual hard work, fairness, and open opportunity, setting aside structural impacts on achievement. Therefore, a key conclusion of my study is that high-stakes testing in Korea appears to play a crucial role in how students perceive accountability and the opportunity structure.

In this study, I found that experiences of opportunity structure vary by students' social class but not their beliefs regarding equality of opportunity. By contrast, in the study of distinct identifications of high-school students from the same low-income background, MacLeod (2008) showed how students make sense of the opportunity structure differently:

> Whereas the Hallway Hangers conclude that the opportunity structure is not open, the Brothers reach an entirely different, and contradictory, conclusion…The Brothers, whose objective life chances are probably lower than those of the Hallway Hangers, nevertheless hold positive attitudes toward the future, while the Hallway Hangers harbor feelings of hopelessness (p. 82).

This conclusion suggests that class status does not determine their consciousness. Instead, "the degree of autonomy individuals exercise at the cultural level" and "the functions of ideology" (p. 8) play a part in students' meaning making in opportunity. The current study reaches a slightly different conclusion from that of MacLeod's study. Students' experiences with class privileges or disadvantages in education were visible, but students did not connect structural issues with achievement. Moreover, their beliefs in the equality of educational opportunity were more determined through testing. They resorted to the good sense of testing. Probably, participants believe that the idea of "education for success and success through education" work well in society. The

achievement ideology operates with testing rhetoric; both ideas are oriented to success through competition.

Furthermore, hegemonic language like "effort makes you a success" hinders participants from reflecting on the contradictions and creates an optimistic, simplistic view of educational opportunity (McQuillan, 1998). Fine (1991) argues that this kind of "ideological fetish" privileges universal access over unequal outcomes. In a culture where educational opportunity is taken- for- granted in universal access to testing, opportunities through testing are seldom questioned as long as testing is given. As Gramsci insists, hegemony spreads through an institutional structure as ideological practice (Apple, 2004; Leonardo, 2003b; Mouffe, 1979). Likewise, my study suggests that high-stakes testing refracts the meaning of schooling, making it contradictory – highlighting educational inequality between classes while legitimizing ideologies of equal opportunity and fairness. It distributes the ideology of meritocracy, denying the various social and economic realities that affect students' performance. In my study, the high achievers strongly favored meritocratic distributions through testing, taking for granted the resulting hierarchy. Rather than examining social structures where they are situated, they frequently refer to outliers - for instance those who succeed on the CSAT in spite of constraints.

Participants showed an eagerness for meritocratic distribution by ability and, as a result, were optimistic about academic hierarchy, though they recognized testing values academic ability solely. Their preference for meritocracy does not necessarily capture the idea that academic ability is promoted through private education and parenting practices in their experiences of achievement. Chang (2011) points out that the ideological function of meritocracy is deeply involved with standards-based education and its chronic contradictions. Consequently it hides educational inequality as well as the unequal

distribution of capital in society. Meritocratic testing is aimed at the idea of equal opportunity and ignores the close association between educational opportunity and social class (M.-R. Kim, 2004).

Participants' positive identification with rhetoric of testing seems to be an urgent response to the fear and crisis produced by the invasion of the neoliberal competition into education. They frequently expressed anxiety about living miserably as a result of low achievement and failure. In a neoliberal context of education focusing on excellence, consumer-driven, competition, and school choice, all accountability and results are attributed to individuals (Y.-J. Jeong, 2011; C.-G. Kim, 2012). In addition, an the economic situation in which the economic disparity between groups is tremendous and class mobility is restricted (Leistyna, 2007), whether students are economically secure or not, they cannot help but study for their future. There is no alternative to studying for a future of security, especially for the lower class. Thus, they tended to identify with outliers who actually succeeded through education.

In the student interviews, gender is barely visible in their interpretations of achievement and educational opportunity. Many studies have addressed gender constructions resulting in differential outcomes in education (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1999), showing that students are socialized differently according to their gender and treated unequally at school (Marks, 2008). Gender bias not only affects students' academic performance but also distorts the equality of educational opportunity. This dissertation looked into how participants interpret achievement and educational opportunity in test-driven schooling. On the basis of gender, however, their responses are not noticeably different.

Most participants neutralized gender effects in achievement. They found little difference in access to education. Some said studying styles sometimes differed between

girls and boys. According to some participants like Hansol, Jiwoo, Bori, Hyesung, and Bada, girls are more persistent, studious, and comprehensive in studying than boys; boys are more intense and efficient. Generally, participants hold the idea that, regardless of gender and class, only hard work and attitude are effective in high-stakes testing. Nari said testing could be beneficial to girls; otherwise, boys would be preferred and privileged in the job market and college admissions. She knew society to be patriarchal and wanted testing to neutralize the prevailing gender bias.

Testing creates common sense notions of achievement and educational opportunity such as the success ideology, meritocracy, and equal opportunity (Apple, 2006). These ideologies privilege winners in academic success and enhance the educational inequality of the status quo, while they silence the contradictions of educational reality and stigmatize losers (Leonardo, 2007). From this perspective, low achievement warrants low-paying jobs as do the results of lack of effort or bad attitudes (Au, 2012). In my study, participants recognized that their idea of educational achievement was controlled by high-stakes testing. At the same time, they accepted ideological constructions through testing – on the basis of individual hard work – of fairness and opportunity.

The most outstanding phenomenon shown through all the data is that participants interpret achievement *individually* while they experience opportunities *structurally*. On the one hand, since achievement is primarily understood as the result of individual hard work in a context of equal opportunity, understandings of achievement are seldom related to class and structural barriers. On the other hand, class affects their daily educational practices and opportunities as these are gained through private education and parents' practices. A gap is found between their understandings of achievement and opportunity. Testing operates as if it gives fair opportunities to all. High-stakes testing provides them

with a paradox: it leads to disparities in achievement and learning while appearing to produce a culture of equal opportunity.

Students' Resistance and Conflicts

When participants try to make sense of the opportunity structure, they often fall back on testing. For them, testing is evidence that educational opportunity is open and fair, even though they witness, in academic achievement, the privileges and disadvantages afforded by the opportunity structure. They do recognize, however, the contradictions of test-based learning. Thus, another important conclusion of my study is that while participants accept testing as representing fairness in educational opportunity, they know at the same time that it distorts the process of learning. An additional aspect of this process of conflict and resistance is that participants struggle to find meanings for education between the dominant narrative of achievement and their own hope for learning, and in this way partly question dominant ideologies of achievement and meritocracy.

Participants' learning is directed by testing, particularly standardized testing, and their educational outcomes measured with test scores. Thus, as many have observed, assessment guides curriculum and instruction as well as the process of learning (Jones, 2001; McTighe & O'Connor, 2005; Shepard, 2000). As more high-stakes consequences are imposed on students' futures, their curriculum is transformed into "curriculum as test-prep" and learning becomes standardized (McNeil, 2000). Obsession with outcomes results in educational alienation, and further renders educational achievement contradictory (Costigan, 2002). My study also found that a few participants, Junsoo and Taeyang for example, struggled to just stay in school. A majority of participants strived for academic success without knowing what they really wanted to accomplish or why

they had to do so in a test-driven teaching and learning environment.

In spite of the struggles and contradictions arising from these kinds of practices, the ideology that justifies those practices was generally embraced by participants. Most participants were aware of something amiss with the test-based practices. At the same time, they knew that they were 'learning to the test' at the expense of their own educational needs and purposes. In the meantime, some participants, including Taeyang and Junsoo, hesitated to follow the designated desires of society, while some like Hyesung and Nari actively adjusted their dreams to fit with larger social desires. Interestingly, middle-class participants recognized well that academic capital was crucial to social capital and further that personal connections constructed through elite universities were more integral to success than ability or career. This can be understood as contradicting their overarching claims for meritocracy, since they acknowledged that society actually operates through a new kind of nepotism. Nonetheless, they seem to identify with ideologies of achievement and meritocracy. Academic success in Korea seems to be tied to the idea of individual effort but is also linked to the construction of social connections which are determined by one's backgrounds, rather than one's hard work. Lee (K.-M. Lee, 2007) argues that academic capital obtained within elite universities in Korea entails social capital as well as cultural capital. As a result it reinforces social inequality. Thus, identifying with the achievement ideology, on the one hand, is an outgrowth of students' realistic responses to a stratified society and an economically uncertain future. On the other hand, it is probable that the ideology can continue to survive its real world contradictions.

MacLeod (2008) studied why some children were optimistic about the achievement ideology while others from the same working-class background were pessimistic. His focus on cultural autonomy is helpful for understanding the interface of

culture and structure. He remarked, "Two groups of boys from the same social stratum nevertheless experience the process of social reproduction in fundamentally different ways" (p. 137). He tried to reveal forms of reproduction that differ from economic determinism. At the micro level, students have their individual autonomy within class-based constraints in education. He saw the internalization of the achievement ideology and conformity to the dominant institutional value not as "incomprehensible self-defeatism but as a perceptive response to the plight" (p. 6). Still, in this case too, ideology works to conceal contradictions. Similarly, working class students' academic identities in my study are explained by their awareness of how society benefits people with academic capital and how, in a stratified society, their class is underprivileged. Academic identification results from their hope for social mobility and their awareness of class discrimination in society.

However, sometimes students resist the dominant ideology and its forms of identification (Giroux, 1983a, 1983b; Willis, 1977). The micro level lens shows how they make alternative senses of educational achievement and opportunity structure in their daily lives. In my study, Junsoo refuses to conform to the schooling discourse. He could see the school was not working for him, that without economic capital and high achievement, he would fail. Likewise, participants such as Garam, Bomi and Jiwoo frequently criticized the achievement discourse, though they ultimately identified with it, fearing the prospect of a future without academic success.

In their interpretations of achievement, participants clearly saw the contradictions of testing. Nonetheless, they strove for academic success because they understood that, to avoid being marked a failure, they had no choice but to do so. During this process, students such as Taeyang felt antipathy toward testing for the way that it divides society into winners and losers. Such antipathy will probably affect participants' academic

identities and psychological formation throughout schooling. Some get frustrated with themselves; others get stressed out. In this way, participants continuously navigate their own educational achievement and societal success through education and testing.

To actively identify with the achievement and success ideology does not always mean assimilating into mainstream society's value system. Brayboy (2005) studied American Indians' "transformational resistance" for the empowerment of their communities. The study's participants interpreted attending Ivy League Universities as a tool to resist unequal power relations. Carter (2003) studied low-income African American youth trying to maintain Black cultural capital and simultaneously the dominant cultural capital for upward mobility. The African American youth strategically negotiated positioning between the former and the latter in different social spheres because they recognized that the dominant capital works to enhance socioeconomic status. O'Connor (1999) discusses how low-income African American youth make sense of opportunity at the intersection of race, class, and gender identity:

> Although the youths in this study maintained that individual effort, hard work, and education are necessary for getting ahead in American society, most related conarratives that articulated how structural constraints limit the efficiency of individual action and influence life chances (p.153).

These youths understand that opportunities are formed differently on the basis of differences in race, class, and gender. For example, some students in O'Connor's (1999) study recognized social inequality by race, "but did not attribute the inequality to a differential opportunity structure" (p.147). In particular, they hold that racial inequality does not affect opportunity in education. Their experience with racial inequality is not necessarily connected to opportunity structure in education. O'Connor described this phenomenon in terms of "conarratives" which work differently in different social spheres.

Similarly, participants in my study did not relate class privileges or disadvantage

to issues of inequality in educational opportunity. Class-based differential experiences, as they see it, are not involved with the opportunity gap in education. Experiencing structural constraints and internalizing (or accepting) the achievement ideology were quite distinct as long as participants understood that the achievement ideology worked for success in the academically stratified society and offered them chances to get ahead, as corroborated in the Brothers' interpretations of educational opportunity in the MacLeod's (2008) study. Participants' conforming to the achievement ideology does not necessarily mean they were ignorant of the contradictions of test-based achievement. Rather, they were continuously conflicted about the meaning of educational achievement under high-stakes testing. Hence, another key conclusion is that the ideological frames of "achievement" and "opportunity" operated differently in students' understandings and experiences of high-stakes testing. For these students, contradictions of achievement under high-stakes testing did not lead to doubts about high-stakes testing being a mechanism of "equal opportunity." Even though they suffered from test-based achievement, testing provided universal access for all students. Barring this route, students believed that social success was impossible.

Participants' social class position in no way indicated their resistance to conforming to an academic identity. Some participants struggled to find educational purposes between their own needs and academic success. Overall, high achievers were more favorable towards academic hierarchy. Junsoo, a low achiever from the lower class, resisted an academic identity, yet he did not necessarily reject the achievement ideology because he believed in success through hard work and strongly blamed himself for his low achievement. Participants like Uri and Junsoo, from the lower class, questioned the validity of class disadvantages. Their upper-class counterparts were less inclined to regard them as contradictions. They all hold a belief in an inevitable hierarchy and

competition in education. Overall, they showed commonality in attributing educational outcomes to individual effort and accordingly blaming individuals for their success or failure.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

It is no exaggeration to say that high-stakes testing frames students' daily lives and educational practices in high schools in Korea. High-stakes testing switches the educational purpose to test-based achievement. During schooling, students struggle to negotiate a meaning for achievement between their own educational needs and socially pressed objectives. Furthermore, ideas inherent to high-stakes testing affect students' values and beliefs regarding achievement and opportunity. The idea of equality of educational opportunity through testing looms in importance over structural constraints. Students find themselves placed in a hierarchy, and suffer its consequences. This study attempted to disclose these contradictions in education by listening to students' voices and recording their experiences. Thus, the findings from this study provide an opportunity to critically reflect on what is going on in Korean secondary schools and what we are doing to our students.

Focusing on Opportunity Gaps

This dissertation shows that understandings of achievement and opportunity in education are disconnected among participants probably because of strong cultural and ideological beliefs in testing. They seldom connect educational outcomes to opportunity structure. Rather, even structural barriers from opportunity structure are reduced to individual effort for achievement. For example, most participants strongly believe that hard work can overcome structural constraints. Even if the achievement gap between

schools is serious, participants are inclined to justify the hierarchy using meritocracy and the achievement ideology. In their understanding, achievement is still a personal issue. Their logic is oriented sharply toward excellence, choice, and success rather than educational equality and social justice.

There is abundant knowledge regarding educational disparities among groups of different races and income levels. Educational policies, however, keep focusing on achievement gaps when addressing educational inequality. To overcome this problem, Welner and Carter (2013) urge educational policymakers to focus their attention on an "opportunity gap frame." They insist that an educational policy like NCLB fails to look at the tremendous and cumulative disparities in opportunities, narrowly focusing on the achievement gap, although achievement and opportunity are intertwined and the achievement gap is led by the opportunity gap as a cause. Ultimately, achievement is closely linked to different opportunities resulting from social class status and racial ethnic backgrounds. At this point, education policy needs to move, by use of the perspective of the structural opportunity frame, towards reducing opportunity gaps resulting from the privatization of education rather than simply focusing on high standards and achievement. Moreover, education policy for educational equality should go along with macro-economic and political support (Anyon, 2005). As the impact of differences in economic capital leads to educational disparities among different social classes, education is more privatized than ever before.

The opportunity frame is also useful for looking at the contradictions of educational achievement in high-stakes testing. In addition to unequal opportunities from the economic structure, students are deprived of opportunities of educational achievement and learning due to test-based practices. Tienken and Zhao (2013) point out that the standards movement including high-stakes testing in fact widens the opportunity gap in

terms of learning. Students experience a narrowed curriculum focusing on test skills and tested subject matter. In addition, students in low-income neighborhoods and racially segregated areas are more likely to learn a restricted curriculum, which is a "pedagogy of poverty."

As shown in this dissertation, "learning to the test" deprives participants of opportunities for authentic learning. The focus on high standards through competitive testing distorts the meaning of educational achievement, in the context of the reorganization of education as the accumulation of scores. This kind of education does not respond to students' educational needs and authentic development which the official curriculum ostensibly pursues. Education policy should reflect on the meaning of learning and care for the majority of students whose learning is alienated by the pressure to achieve high scores. In the context of "the banking system of education" as an accumulation of mechanistic knowledge (Freire, 1998), in addition to losing learning autonomy, students gradually lose their educational potential and even competiveness, which have a meaning that is distinct from test scores,

In the classroom, also, critical pedagogy is necessary in order to question the inevitability of naturalized attitudes and practices, and to raise awareness of contradictions in education (Darder, et al., 2003). Basic beliefs and assumptions are not questioned in the traditional classroom because, within hegemonic relations, this value system is taken for granted (Darder, 2012). Meritocratic hierarchy, test-based achievement, and deficit thinking on the basis of the frame of success and failure should be questioned in education (Kincheloe, 2007). Thus, critical pedagogy can contribute to ethical discussions aimed at educational justice and equality. This should enable us to reflect on concerns and contradictions connected to the opportunity structure and on the ideological discourses of high-stakes testing. In addition, critical pedagogy questions

decontextualized, standardized test-driven achievement and promotes the discourse of autonomy of learning as well as students' own knowledge construction.

Rethinking Testing

This dissertation draws attention to the purposes of educational achievement as well as to the opportunity structure. It does so to call for critical reflection on test-based practices in Korean secondary education. A lack of attention to students' experiences at the micro level might lead to distorted interpretations of high-stakes testing and result in failing to look at students' educational alienation. Structural and cultural analysis is helpful for rethinking how high-stakes testing operates to affect students' understandings and experiences with educational achievement and opportunity structure.

This study suggests linking interpretations of educational achievement to both structural issues and ideological constructions of testing. The micro- level accounts of achievement and opportunity through students' daily experiences lead to a critical discussion of the macro sociocultural beliefs and economic contexts in education. Thus, this study found that testing intensifies the contradictions of learning and achievement, and simultaneously serves as a rationale for structural inequalities. The idea of "false consciousness" through ideological practices still works for making sense of students' defense of testing as ensuring fairness and equality. By relying on testing, class privilege and deprivations are reduced in interpretations of academic achievement to individual hard work and intelligence. Further, some students justify the academic hierarchy as a result of meritocratic distribution through testing; this hierarchy becomes the basis of social inequalities and class stereotypes. To establish a new paradigm of testing policy, it is meaningful to explore how, behind the "good sense" of high-stakes testing, it determines students' daily lives, beliefs, emotions, aspirations, and family strategies.

As to student achievement in Korea, the problem is not high standards but rather student alienation in learning and unequal opportunities in education (I.-H. Kim, 2010). Whereas the overall achievement level is very high and the college entrance rate is about 80%, class inequalities are still prevalent in college entrance and class reproduction through higher education (M.-R. Kim, 2004). The problem does not concern achievement but opportunity gaps in education. In addition, the purpose of school should not lie in academic attainment as accumulation of scores, but in educational achievement as learning. Thus, this study implies, on the basis of a critical analysis of the achievement ideology in Korean education policies, that the current policy focus on free choice, market-driven achievement, excellence, efficiency, and competition fails to solve issues concerning educational inequalities and alienation.

Educational policy in Korea needs to investigate how economic conditions and ideological contexts penetrate test-based achievement. Also, its focus needs to shift to educational justice and equality in order to remedy structural contradictions mediated by opportunity structure. In addition to policies that balance educational opportunities between areas and schools, education policy should attend to individual students' educational needs, particularly in less privileged areas.

It is necessary to rethink assessment and the standardization of assessment which are currently used only for grading and sorting students rather than informing them of their strengths and weaknesses. Testing should be used as an interpretational tool, not for classification. The current tests merely tell students their scores and grades; they say nothing about their strengths and weaknesses specifically. The nine grades are too simple to characterize their learning process. Colleges should regard tests as one reference point, not as a critical index of decisions. Thus, instead of the nine-grade system leading to a single test, a criterion-based test that shows what students have accomplished and a total

scoring system that balances between subjects can prevent the high- stakes currently centered around the main subject areas.

It is also necessary to examine the frequency with which the CSAT is given and provide more opportunities to students. In this way, the high-stakes of the test and students' psychological stress can be lessened. According to the characteristics of subject areas, a pass/fail system could be introduced. Above all, tests should be arranged to reflect the curriculum and instruction in high school. It makes little sense that the curriculum and instruction reflect testing instead of vice versa. Hence, school assessment should also focus more on student performance by intensifying performance tests and by diversifying assessment methods than on the mechanical accumulation of knowledge. Even on the occasion of grading with high-stakes, tests still should be informative, and education policies need to devise a way of attenuating the structural constraints on achievement.

Understanding the Continued Force of Ideology in Social Reproduction

This study is rooted in an interest in educational ideologies affecting our meaning-making and framing educational practices. In Fine's (1991) book, *Framing Dropouts*, she describes ideology as covering contradictions and continuing to form consciousness. When I was a teacher, I, too, felt something ideological hanging over my understanding of educational contradictions and preventing me from reflecting on where these contradictions arose from. Mainly, I subscribed to the notion of achievement through hard work for success and blamed students who were left behind. Indeed, why did they not take advantage of an educational opportunity equally given to all? Why did they make no effort to perform better than others? Although educational injustice and inequities were evident at every moment in educational settings, discourses focusing on universal access

to education and the good intentions of testing prevailed. Fine insightfully says, "The reproduction of social inequality persists easily without malintent" (p.183).

Educational life under high-stakes testing needs a cultural analysis and an interactive interpretation of culture and structure. Otherwise, the achievement and success ideology inherent in testing justifies inequalities in education and contributes to reproduction. Whether intended or not, the logic of the ideology of success and the reservation of excellence for elite education become dominant through high-stakes testing. Further, ideology stops us from recognizing the contradictions of opportunity structure, and tries to obscure class inequalities in education. Indeed, ideology survives through practices. In addition, it reproduces perspectives and beliefs. Using strong beliefs in the fairness and equal access of testing, students justify contradictory realities and experiences as inevitable. This is how ideology as false consciousness continues to function in affecting understanding, and attitudes.

In Korean society, where social mobility is won almost solely through education, schools have become the official system of justifying competition and excluding students who are disadvantaged (G.-S. Lee, 2011). The overwhelming focus in schooling is on academic excellence, not opportunity. A cultural and historical belief in meritocratic distribution through high-stakes testing frames students' achievement, yet students are prevented from seeing the inequalities and contradictions generated by the structure. The culture of equal opportunity neglects students' struggles under testing, which defines educational achievement in terms of academic hierarchy (Au, 2009). A turn to the intersectional analysis of structure and culture in high-stakes testing has implications for reflecting on students' contradictory experiences and for interpreting high-stakes testing as cultural and political practices in a neoliberal context. The reality of achievement is not independent of either material-based explanations or ideological constructions. Thus,

from the more macro perspective, the political and economic context of education policy and its implementation needs to be critically reflected on. Then, the micro perspective on testing practices helps us reveal how testing punishes students and creates a deficit model and how it relocates low achievers and lower income students ideologically.

My study shows that participants are partly aware of the contradictions inherent in particular ideologies and yet still cling to them. For future research, researchers need to continue to locate students' meaning- making in high-stakes testing at the center of research and to explore how their academic identity and educational beliefs are formed within a neoliberal economic context and political background. Furthermore, research should also explore how high-stakes testing and accompanying policies affect parents' ideas about educating children; also, how do class-related experiences mediate between parenting practices and educational outcomes? In addition, researchers should explore how parents' basic beliefs and ideologies in relation to education, particularly those of middle- class "manager moms," influence education policy.

My study shows that ideologies still powerfully contribute to social and cultural reproduction in education. Ideologies inherent in high-stakes testing and fortified through it frame everyday educational practices and understandings of educational achievement. One of the most notable findings in this dissertation is that even under circumstances where educational disparities are widened by social structure, the achievement ideology attributing outcomes primarily to individual effort persists among students. Ideologies through testing practices strongly affect students' beliefs about testing being fair and equal. Furthermore, ideology is compatible with contradictory responses. Revealing ideologies oriented to achievement and opportunity is useful in highlighting heretofore - invisible contradictions in education. An ideological analysis is useful for capturing what is persistently disguised and revealing how that disguised quality promotes certain forms

of schooling.

CONCLUSION

The study shows that Korean students' experiences with high-stakes testing are influenced by their social class and achievement levels. High-stakes testing does not contribute to reducing the achievement gap between classes; in fact, it reinforces educational alienation as well as opportunity gaps in a neoliberal educational context. Furthermore, my findings show that high-stakes testing, as a cultural practice that affects students' daily lives and curriculum and instruction, contributes to the ideological construction of students' understanding of achievement and opportunity structure. Failing to take into account students' struggles to overcome structural constraints and contradictory experiences resulting from the ideology of achievement and success, high-stakes testing becomes the medium through which students' social desires are reproduced. This intersectional analysis of culture and structure in relation to high-stakes testing yields important understandings of the way in which the ideology of achievement responds to students' aspirations and how those aspirations help sustain this ideology.

Appendix: Interview Protocol

1. Do you enjoy school? Why or why not?
2. Do you like taking tests? In what ways are you reminded of testing? How has it affected your experiences of schooling since you entered school?
3. How do you define the meanings and purpose of schooling? What do you want to accomplish through schooling? How has it changed throughout K-11?
4. In this sense, what is the most important task to you in schooling?
5. How is that related to your definition of success in school? What do you think about success, intelligence, smartness, and ability? In terms of these, how do you judge yourself?
6. Who would succeed or not? And why? What kind of life do they live?
7. Do you think any student can grow up to a president or CEO and our society is open and fair and full of opportunity? Why or why not?
8. How do you see the relationship between educational achievement and occupational outcome?
9. What do you think about school as an institution that can promise the social mobility for all students?
10. Do you think you will succeed? Do you think you live better than your parents in the future? What do you think about economic hierarchy or academic hierarchy?
11. Why do some people live in poverty or in stability?
12. Tell me about the current schooling system where you are situated.
13. How does the testing system affect your educational needs? Why do you get tested in the standardized high-stakes testing? What are the most important

reason and purpose of testing?

14. How do you define yourself as an achiever? How do you make an effort to achieve so?
15. What do you think different school funding and teacher evaluation by the result from the Nationwide Achievement Testing? What if it affects students' status like advancement, repelling, tracking, etc.? How is this testing different from the College Scholastic Ability Test? Is this open and fair to all? Why?
16. What kind of messages do you get delivered by teachers, tests, parents, and curriculum? How do you feel under a rigorous testing and curriculum? What do you think under those messages? Among them, what are the valuable beliefs to you? Or, if you have your own beliefs other than those, can you explain them?
17. How do you define your socioeconomic status? And why? How does it affect your achievements? How do your parents, friends, teachers, schools, and neighborhood affect your schooling?
18. What does CSAT evaluate about you? What is not evaluated by that?
19. What do your teachers and parents expect you to perform in school?

References

Abrams, L. M., Pedulla, J. J., & Madaus, G. F. (2003). Views from the Classroom: Teachers' Opinions of Statewide Testing Programs. *Theory into Practice, 42*(1), 18-29.

Ahn, A. (2012, July 18). The Tuition and other Expences of Specialized Purpose Schools and Autonomous Private Schools in Seoul, the Highest 17 Times of General High Schools *The Hankookilbo*.

Ainsworth, J. W., & Wiggan, G. (2006). Reconsidering "Material Conditions": How Neighborhood Context can Shape Educational Outcomes across Racial Groups. In E. M. Horvat & C. O'Connor (Eds.), *Beyond Acting White: Reframing the Debate on Black Student Achievement* (pp. 159-175). Lanham, ML: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. .

Akom, A. A. (2003). Reexamining Resistance as Oppositional Behavior: The Nation of Islam and the Creation of a Black Achievement Ideology. *Sociology of Education, 76*(4), 305-325.

Alexander, P. A., & Riconscente, M. M. (2005). A Matter of Proof: Why Achievement ≠ Learning. In J. S. Carlson & J. R. Levin (Eds.), *The No Child Left Behind Legislation: Educational Research and Federal Funding* (pp. 27-36). Greenwich, CN: Information Age publishing.

Althusser, L. (2001). *Lenin and Philogophy and Other Essays*. New York: Monthly Reveiw Press.

Amrein, A. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2002). High-Stakes Testing, Uncertainty, and Student Learning. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*(18).

Amrein, A. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2003). Re-Analysis of NAEP Math and Reading Scores in States with and without High-Stakes Tests: Response to Roshenshine. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(25).

Anagnostopoulos, D. (2003). The New Accountability, Student Failure, and Teachers' Work in Urban High Schools. *Educational Policy, 17*(3), 291-316.

Anyon, J. (2005). What "Count" as Educational Policy? Notes toward a New Paradigm. *Harvard Educational Review, 75*(1), 65-88.

Anyon, J. (2011). *Marx and Education*. New York: Routledge.

Apple, M. W. (1996). *Cultural Politics and Education*. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Apple, M. W. (2004). *Ideology and Curriculum* (3rd ed.). New York: RouteledgeFalmer.

Apple, M. W. (2006). *Educating the "Right" way: Markets, Standards, God, and Inequality* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Au, W. (2007). High-Stakes Testing and Curricular Control: A Qualitative Metasynthesis. *Educaitonal Researcher, 36*(5), 258-267.

Au, W. (2009). *Unequal by Design: High-Stakes Testing and the Standardization of Inequality*. New York: Routledge.

Au, W. (2011). Teaching under the new Taylorism: High-stakes testing and the standardization of the 21st century curriculum *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 43*(1), 25-45.

Au, W. (2012). *Critical Curriculum Studies: Education, Consciousness, and the Politics of Knowing*. New York: Routledge.

Baek, B.-b., & Kim, K.-k. (2007). Structural Relationships between Academic Achievement and Economic, Social, and Cultural Capital. *Journal of Educational Sociology, 17*(3), 101-129.

Banks, J. A. (1998). The Lives and Values of Researchers: Implications for Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society. *Educational Researcher, 27*(7), 4-77.

Bloom, B. S., Hastings, J. T., & Madaus, G. F. (1971). *Handbook on Formative and Summative Evaluation of Student Learning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2010). *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (3rd ed.). Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Bourdieu, P. (2000). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In R. Arum & I. R. Beattie (Eds.), *The Structure of Schooling* (pp. 56-69). Mountain view, CA: Mayfield publishing company.

Boyle-Baise, M., Hsu, M.-C., Johnson, S., Serriere, S. C., & Stewart, D. (2008). Putting Reading First: Teaching Social Studies in Elementary Classrooms. *Theory and Research in Social Education, 36*(3), 233-255.

Brantlinger, E. (2003). *Dividing Classes: How the Middle Class Negotiates and Rationalizes School Advantage*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Brantlinger, E. (2007). (Re)Turning to Marx to Understand the Unexpected Anger among "Winners" in Schooling: A Critical Social Psychology Perspective. In J. A. VanGalen & G. W. Noblit (Eds.), *Late to Class: Social Class and Schooling in the New Economy* (pp. 235-268). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Transformational Resistance and Social Justice: American Indicans in Ivy League Universities. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 36*(3), 193-211.

Brophy, J., & Alleman, J. (2008). Early Elementary Social Studies. In L. Levstik & C. Tyson (Eds.), *Handbook of Research in Social Studies Education*. New York: Routledge.

Brown, A. L., & DeLissovoy, N. (2011). Economies of Racism: Grounding Education Policy Research in the Complex Dialectic of Race, Class, and Capital. *Journal of Education Policy, 26*(5), 595-619.

Byung-Chul, A. (2008). Decomposing the Factors of Academic Achievement Inequalities : A Case of Scholastic Achievement Test in Korea. *Economic Studies, 26*(3), 25-46.

Carlson, D. (2006). Are We Making Progress?: Ideology and Curriclum in the Age of No Child Left Behind. In L. Weis, C. McCarty & G. Dimitriadis (Eds.), *Ideology, Curriclum, and the New Sociology of Education: Revisiting the Work of Michael Apple* (pp. 91-114). New York: Taylor & Francis Group.

Carnoy, M., & Loeb, S. (2002). Does External Acountability Affect Student Outcomes? A Cross-State Analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 24*(4), 305-331.

Carter, P. L. (2003). "Black" Cultural Capital, Status Positioning, and Schooling Conflicts for Low-Income African American Youth. *Social Problems, 50*(1), 136-155.

Chang, E.-J. (2011). The Rise of the Meritocracy in Korean Society and its Education Problem: in Searching for the Democratic Justice. *Society and Philosophy*(21), 71-106.

Cho, S. (2010). Why Culture?: The Political Economy of Cultural Politics. In Z. Leonardo (Ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Politics and Education* (pp. 175-192). Boston: Sense Publishers.

Cimbricz, S. (2002). State-Mandated Testing and Teachers' Beliefs and Practice. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 10*(2).

Clarke, M. M., Madaus, G. F., Horn, C. L., & Ramos, M. A. (2000). Retrospective on Educational Testing and Assessment in the 20th Century. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 32*(2), 159 - 181.

Coe, R. J. (2012). The Nature of Educational Research. In J. Arthur, M. Waring, R. Coe & L. V. Hedges (Eds.), *Research Methods and Methodologies in Education*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Costigan, A. T. (2002). Teaching the Culture for High-Stakes Testing: Learning to New Teachers. *Action in Teacher Education, 23*(4), 28-34.

Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes Toward the Poor and Attributions for Poverty. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(2), 207-227.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research Process*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Darder, A. (2012). *Culture and Power in the Classroom: Educational Foundations for the Schooling of Bicultural Students*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Darder, A., Baltodano, M., & Torres, R. D. (2003). Critical Pedagogy: A Introduction. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (pp. 1-21). New York: RoutledgeFAlmer.

DeLissovoy, N. (2008). *Power, Crisis, and Education for Liberation*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

DeLissovoy, N., & McLaren, P. (2003). Educational 'Accountability' and the Violence of Capital: a Marxian Reading. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(2), 131-143.

deMarrais, K. B., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *The Way Schools Work: A Sociological Analysis of Education* (3rd ed.). White Plains, N.Y.: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-31). Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Dever, M. T., & Carlston, G. (2009). No Child Left Behind: Giving Voice to Teachers of Young Children. *Journal of Educational Research & Policy Studies, 9*(1), 61-79.

Diamond, J. B. (2007). Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Rethinking the Connection between High-Stakes Testing Policy and Classroom Instruction. *Sociology of Education, 80*(4), 285-313.

Dreier, P., Mollenkopf, J., & Swanstrom, T. (2004). *Place Matters*. Wichita, KS: University Press of Kansas.

Eagleton, T. (2007). *Ideology* (2nd ed.). Brooklyn, NY: Verso.

Eisner, E. W. (1979). *The Educational Imagination: On the Design and Evaluation of School Programs*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc.

Fine, M. (1991). *Framing Dropouts: Notes on the Politics of an Urban Public High School*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Fine, M., & Weis, L. (2005). Compositional Studies, in Two Parts: Critical Theorizing and Analysis on Social (In)Justice. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 65-84). Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Foley, D. (2010). The Rise of Class Culture Theory in Educational Anthropology. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 41*(3), 215-227.

Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The Interview: from Neutral Stance to Political Involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 695-727). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Freire, P. (1998). *Pedagogy of Freedom*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield publishers, Inc.

Frymer, B. (2010). The Frankfurt School and Education. In Z. Leonardo (Ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Politics and Education* (pp. 161-174). Boston: Sense publishers.

Gasoi, E. (2009). How We Define Success: Holding Values in an Era of High Stakes Accountability. *Schools: Studies in Education, 6*(2), 173-186.

Gillham, B. (2001). *Case Study Research Methods*. New York: Continuum.

Giroux, H. A. (1983a). Ideology and Agency in the Process of Schooling. *Journal of Education, 165*(1), 12-34.

Giroux, H. A. (1983b). Theories of Reproduction and Resistance in the New Sociology of Education: A Critical Analysis. *Harvard Educational Review, 53*(3), 257-293.

Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and Resistance in Education: Towards a Pedagogy for the Opposition*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Giroux, H. A. (2003a). Critical Theory and Educational Practice. In A. Darder, M. Baltodano & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (pp. 27-56). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Giroux, H. A. (2003b). Education Incorporated? In A. Darder, M. Blatodano & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader* (pp. 119-125). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Giroux, H. A. (2003c). *Public Spaces and Private Lives*. New York: Powman & Littlefield.

Giroux, H. A. (2009). *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability*. New York, NY: Palgrave macmillan.

Giroux, H. A. (2010). Neoliberalism, Pedagogy, and Cultural Politics: Beyond the Theatre of Cruelty. In Z. Leonardo (Ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Politics and Education* (pp. 49-70). Boston: Sense Publishers.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (Q. Hoare & G. N. Smith, Trans.). New York: International Publishers.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1998). Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research* (pp. 195-220). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Guiso, L., Monte, F., Sapienza, P., & Zingales, L. (2008). Culture, Gender and Math. *Science, 320*(5580), 1164-1165.

Gwon, E.-J. (2012, February 20). 80,000 vs. 540,000 won, the Severe Polarization of Educational Expenditure. *The Hangyoreh*.

Gwon, Y.-E. (2013, March 19). I should Get into SKY...Retaking is Required in Gangnam. *The Hankookilbo*.

Gwon, Y.-E., Song, O.-J., Song, E.-M., & Kim, G.-J. (2013, April 03). Not Able for

College, and the Class is the Drudgery. We Just Wait the Class to End *The Hankookilbo*.

Haney, W. (2000). The Myth of the Texas Miracle in Education. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8*(41).

Heubert, J. P., & Hauser, R. M. (1999). *High Stakes: Testing for Tracking, Promotion, and Graduation*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Hinchey, P. H. (2010). *Finding Freedom in the Classroom: a Practical Implication to Critical Theory*. New York: Peter Lang.

Ho, S.-R., & Jae, H.-J. (2006). Implications for the Korea Educational Reform Policy for Enhancing Students' Achievement through Tests from the Review of the Studies on the Effects of State Testing on Teachers and Students in U.S.A. *Journal of Education Evaluation, 19*(1), 73-99.

Hoffman, J. V., Assaf, L. C., & Paris, S. G. (2001). High-Stakes testing in reading: Today in Texas, tomorrow? (cover story). *Reading Teacher, 54*(5), 482-493.

Holme, J. J., Richards, M. P., Jimerson, J. B., & Cohen, R. W. (2010). Assessing the Effects of High School Exit Examinations. *Review of Educational Research, 80*(4), 476-526.

Horn, C. (2003). High-Stakes Testing and Students: Stopping or Perpetuating a Cycle of Failure? *Theory into Practice, 42*(1), 30-41.

Hughes, S., & Bailey, J. (2001). What Students Think about High-Stakes Testing. *Educational Leadership, 59*(4), 74-76.

Hur, E., Shin, C., & Jung, J. (2012). The Analysis on the Actual Conditions and Characteristics of Educational Differentiation in Academic High Schools. *Journal of Open Education, 20*(1), 141-164.

Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies. *American Educational Research Journal, 44*(3), 493-518.

Hursh, D. (2009). *High-Stakes Testing and the Decline of Teaching and Learning: the Real Crisis in Education*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc. .

Hwang, H.-S., Lee, J.-H., Kang, H.-C., Kim, Y.-G., Yoon, Y.-J., Lee, G., et al. (2013). *Why, Curriculum Acceleration should be Forbidden?* Seoul: Basic Books.

Jang, E.-S. (2011). Students' Perception of Korea Scholastic Aptitude Test. *Journal of CheongRam Korean Language Education, 44*, 331-360.

Jeon, D.-R. (2008). University Admission Process: Student Selection by University or University Selction by Student. *Education Research and Practice, 73*, 21-59.

Jeong, W.-G. (2011). A Study on Korean College Entrance Exams from the Aspects of Fairness and Educational Aims. *Society and Philosophy*(21), 107-140.

Jeong, Y.-J. (2011). There is No Seat for 'Us' in the Neoliberal Train. In G.-S. Lee (Ed.), *The Era of Ineducability* (pp. 31-49). Seoul: Educaiton Community Friend.

Jones, L. V. (2001). Assessing Achievement Versus High-Stakes Testing: A Crucial Contrast. *Educational Assessment, 7*(1), 21-28.

Joo, Y.-J. (2010, October 13). The Reason Why Obama's Praise for Korean Education is not Welcome. *Seoul Broadcast System*.

Kang, C.-D. (2007). The Study on the Social Historical Change Process and Feature in the University Entrance System of Korea. *The Journal of Research in Education, 28*, 83-113.

Kay, A. C., Jost, J. T., & Young, S. (2005). Victim Derogation and Victim Enhancement as Alternate Routes to System Justification. *Psychological Science, 16*(3), 240-246.

Kim, C.-G. (2009). A Critical Study on Hegemonic Discourse of the Educational Policy of Lee Myung-bak's Government: the Discourse of the Low Educability of the Public Schools. *Korean Journal of Sociology of Education, 19*(1), 81-102.

Kim, C.-G. (2012). The Process and Characteristics of Neoliberaliztion of Korea Education: Becoming like Competitive Cram Schools and Establishment of 'Neoliberal Governmentality' *The Jounal of Educational Research, 10*(119-149).

Kim, I.-H. (2010). Tasks of Education Welfare Policy for Eliminating Education Alienation and Disparity. *Korean Social Policy Review, 17*(1), 129-175.

Kim, J.-E. (2013, April 03). Nine out of Ten Teachers said General High School is in the Crisis. *The Hankookilbo*.

Kim, J.-Y. (2011). Policies for Reducing Achievement Gaps among Korea Students. *Applied Economy, 13*(2), 191-239.

Kim, M.-R. (2004). Meritocracy Structure in Opportunities of Higher Education: Admission Opportunities of Genders to Each Type of Colleges and Universities. *A Journal of Research in Education, 20*, 1-21.

Kim, S., Song, M.-Y., Kim, J., & Yi, H. S. (2011). A Further Analysis of Achievement Gap among Districts based on 2009 NAEA (National Assessment of Educational Achievement) Results. *Educational Evaluation Studies, 24*(1).

Kim, W.-Y. (2012, November 07). Keep Watch on Your Children's Depression after the CSAT. *The Herald Economy*.

Kim, Y.-H. (2011, December 16). The Remote Dream of Social Mobility. *The Joonangilbo*.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2004). *Critical Pedagogy Primer*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2007). Critical Pedagogy in the Twenty-first Century. In P. McLaren & J. L. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical Pedagogy: Where Are We Now?* (pp. 9-42). New

York: Peter Lang.

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2005). Rethinking Critical Theory and Qualitative Research In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 303-342). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Kliebard, H. M. (1995). *The Struggle for the American Curriculum* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Koro-Ljungberg, M., Yendol-Hoppey, D., Smith, J. J., & Hayes, S. B. (2009). Epistemological Awareness, Instantiation of Methods, and Uninformed Methodological Ambiguity in Qualitative Research Projects. *Educational Researcher, 38*(9), 687-699.

Lareau, A. (2003). *Unequal Childhoods*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press.

Lee, B.-H. (2002). Characteristics and Prospect of the Neo-liberalism Educational Reform. *The Journal of Korean Education, 29*(2), 33-55.

Lee, G.-S. (2011). A Thought on Ineducability in Current Schools. In G.-S. Lee (Ed.), *The Era of Ineducability* (pp. 15-30). Seoul: Educational Commuity Friend.

Lee, J., & Wong, K. K. (2004). The Impact of Accountability on Racial and Socioeconomic Equity: Considering Both School Resources and Achievement Outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal, 41*(4), 797-832.

Lee, K.-M. (2007). A Study on "Hakbeolism" and Class conflict in Korea Society: Toward a Theorization of "Hakbeol" Capital *Korean Journal of Educational Sociology, 17*(4), 63-85.

Lee, Y. (2008). A Study on Spatial Gaps of Overseas Travel Experiences of High School Students in Seoul. *Journal of Geography Education, 52*, 45-60.

Leistyna, P. (2007). Neoliberal Non-Sense. In P. McLaren & J. L. Kincheloe (Eds.), *Critical Pedagogy*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Leonardo, Z. (2003a). Discourse and Critique: Outlines of a Post-Structural Theory of Ideology. *Journal of Education Policy, 18*(2), 203-214.

Leonardo, Z. (2003b). *Ideology, Discourse, and School Reform*. Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.

Leonardo, Z. (2005). Through the Multicultural Glass: Althusser, ideology and race relations in post-civil rights America. *Policy Futures in Education, 3*(4), 400-412.

Leonardo, Z. (2007). The War on Schools: NCLB, Nation Creation and the Educational Construction of Whiteness. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 10*(3), 261-278.

Leonardo, Z. (2010a). Affirming Ambivalence: Introduction to Cultural Politica and Education. In Z. Leonardo (Ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Politics and Education*

(pp. 1-45). Boston: Sense Publishers.

Leonardo, Z. (2010b). Ideology and Its Modes of Existence: Toward an Althusserian Theory of Race and Racism. In Z. Leonardo (Ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Politics and Education* (pp. 195-217). Boston: Sense Publishers.

Linn, R. L. (2000). Assessments and Accountability. *Educational Researcher, 29*(2), 4-16.

Linn, R. L. (2003). Accountability: Responsibility and Reasonable Expectations. *Educational Researcher, 32*(7), 3-13.

Lipman, P. (2004). *High Stakes Education: Inequality, Globalization, and Urban School Reform*. New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Lopez, N. (2002). Race-Gender Experiences and Schooling: Second-Generation Dominican, West Indian, and Haitian Youth in New York City. *Race Ethinicity and Education, 5*(1), 67-89.

Lundy, G. F. (2003). The Myths Of Oppositional Culture. *Journal of Black Studies, 33*(4), 450-467.

Mabry, L. (2008). Case Study in Social Research. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman & J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods* (pp. 214-227). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

MacLeod, J. (2008). *Ain't No Makin'it: Aspiration & Attainment in a Low-Income Neighborhood*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Madaus, G., & Clarke, M. (2001). The Adverse Impact of High-Stakes Testing on Minority Students. In G. Orfield & M. L. Kornhaber (Eds.), *Raising Standards or Raising Barriers? Inequality and High-Stakes Testing in Public Edcuation*. New York, NY: A century foundation book.

Marcuse, H. (1964). *One-dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Boston: Beacon press.

Marks, G. N. (2008). Accounting for the Gender Gaps in Student Performance in Reading and Mathematics: Evidence from 31 Countries. *Oxford Review of Education, 34*(1), 89-109.

Marx, K. (1961). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (M. Milligan, Trans.). Mineola, NY: Dover publication, INC.

Marx, K. (1998). *The German Ideology*. New York: Prometheus Books.

Marx, K. (2008). *The Communist Manifesto*. London: Pluto Press.

McCarthy, C. (1988). Rethinking Liberal and Radical Perspectives on Racial Inequality in Schooling: Making the Case for Nonsynchrony. *Harvard Educational Review, 58*(3), 265-279.

McLaren, P. (2003). Critical Pedagogy: a Look at the Major Concepts. In A. Darder, M.

Baltodano & R. D. Torres (Eds.), *The Critical Pedagogy Reader*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

McNeil, L. M. (2000). *Contradictions of School Reform: Educational Costs of Standardized Testing*. New York: Routledge.

McNeil, L. M., & Valenzuela, A. (2001). The harmful impact of the TAAS system of testing in Texas: Beneath the accountability rhetoric. In M. Kornharber & G. Orfield (Eds.), *Raising standards or raising barriers? Inequality and high stakes testing in public education* (pp. 127-150). New York: Century Foundation.

McQuillan, P. J. (1998). *Educational Opportunity in an Urban American High School: A Cultural Analysis*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

McTighe, J., & O'Connor, K. (2005). Seven Practices for Effective Learning. *Educational Leadership, 63*(3), 10-17.

Mears, C. L. (2012). In-depth Interviews. In J. Arthur, M. Waring, R. Coe & L. V. Hedges (Eds.), *Research Methods and Methodologies in Education* (pp. 170-176). Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). Introduction to Qualitative Research. In S. B. Merriam (Ed.), *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative Research: a Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Mouffe, C. (1979). Hegemony and Ideology. In C. Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. Boston, MA: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Nichols, S. L., & Berliner, D. C. (2007). *Collateral Damage: How High-Stakes Testing Corrupts America's Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.

Nichols, S. L., Glass, G., & Berliner, D. C. (2006). High-Stakes Testing and Student Achievement: Does Accountability Pressure Increase Student Learning? *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 14*(1).

Noddings, N. (2004). High stakes testing: Why? *Theory and Research in Education, 2*(3), 263-269.

Noddings, N. (2006). *What our Schools should Teach*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Noddings, N. (2007). *Philosophy of Education* (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

O'Connor, C. (1999). Race, Class, and Gender in America: Narratives of Opportunity among Low-Income African American Youths. *Sociology of Education, 72*(3), 137-157.

O'Connor, C., Horvat, E. M., & Lewis, A. E. (2006). Framing the Field: Past and Future Research on the Historic Underachievement of Black Students. In E. M. Horvat & C. O'Connor (Eds.), *Beyond Acting White: Reframing the Debate on Black Student Achievement* (pp. 1-24). Lanham, ML: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Ogbu, J. (1987). Variability in Minority School Performance: A Problem in Search of an Explanation. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly, 18*(4), 312-334.

Orfield, M. (2002). *American Metropolitics: The New Suburban Reality*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

Park, S.-H. (2010). Possibilities and Limits of High Stakes Testing in U.S. *Korean Journal of Comparative Education, 20*(5), 1-21.

Park, S.-J. (2011). The Birth of Manager Moms and the Neoliberal Educational Reform. In G.-S. Lee (Ed.), *The Era of Ineducability* (pp. 50-61). Seoul: Educaitonal Community Friend.

Park, Y.-S., & Ban, S.-J. (2005). The Political Discourse Emerged into Education Reform Process in Korea. *The Journal of Politics of Education, 12*(2), 63-87.

Park, Y.-Y. (2013, Feb. 8). You who Earn Monthly $1,500 are the Middle Class, not the Lower Class. *ChoSunIlBo*.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (2 ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Perry, T. (2003). Competing Theories of Group Achievement. In T. Perry, C. Steele & A. Hilliard (Eds.), *Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students* Boston, MA: Beacon.

Popham, J. W. (2003). *Test Better, Teach Better: the Instructional Role of Assessment*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Raymond, M. E., & Hanushek, E. A. (2003). High-Stakes Research: Accountability Works after All. *Education Next, 3*(3), 48-55.

Riehl, C. (2001). Bridges to the Future: The Contributions of Qualitative Research to the Sociology of Education. *Sociology of Education, 74*, 115-134.

Ritchie, D. A. (2003). *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford university press.

Rosenshine, B. (2003). High-Stakes Testing: Another Analysis *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 11*(24).

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative Interviewing: the Art of Hearing Data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Ryu, N.-Y. (2011, November 12). The High School Test-Takers' Continuous Suicide...the Murders by the High-Stakes System. *The Newsis*

Shepard, L. A. (2000). The Role of Assessment in a Learning Culture. *Educational Researcher, 29*(7), 4-14.

Shepard, L. A. (2008). A Brief History of Accountability Testing, 1965-2007. In K. E. Ryan & L. A. Shepard (Eds.), *The Future of Test-Based Educational Accountability* (pp. 25-46). New York, NY: Routledge.

Shepard, L. A., Hammerness, K., Darling-Hammond, L., Rust, F., Snowden, J. B., Gordon, E., et al. (2005). Assessment. In L. Darling-Hammond & J. Bransford (Eds.), *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World* (pp. 275-326). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shim, J.-U. (2012, November 26). Adolescent Depressive Sympthoms. *Seoul Newspaper*.

Shin, I.-Y. (2002). A Study on the Criticisms of Neo-Liberal Educational Reform and the Justification of Educational Publicism Logic in Korea. *Journal of Educational Research, 40*(6), 73-94.

Shin, M. H. (2010). The Academic Performance Gap between Social Classes and Parenting Practices. *Korean Journal of Social Welfare Studies, 41*(2), 217-245.

Sipe, L., & Constable, S. (1996). A Chart of Four Contemporary Research Paradigms: Metaphors for the Modes of Inquiry. *Taboo: The Journal of Culture and Education, 1*, 153-163.

Smith, M. L. (1991). Put to the Test: The Effects of External Testing on Teachers. *Educational Researcher, 20*(5), 8-11.

Song, M.-S. (2011, October 15). What is the Hierarchy of Universities...the Maximum 40 percent Difference in Income *The Segye*.

Spencer, B., & Castano, E. (2007). Social Class is Dead. Long Live Social Class! Stereotype Threat among Low Socioeconomic Status Individuals. *Social Justice Research, 20*, 418-432.

Stake, R. E. (1994). Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 236-247). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Stake, R. E. (2005). *Multiple Case Study Analysis*. New York: Guilford Publication, Inc.

Stecher, B. M. (2002). Consequences of Large-Scale, High-Stakes Testing on School and Classroom Practice. In L. S. Hamilton, B. M. Stecher & S. P. Klein (Eds.), *Making Sense of Test-Based Accountability in Education* (pp. 79-100). Pittsburgh, PA: RAND.

Steele, C. (1997). A Threat in the Air: How Stereotype Shape Intellectural Identity and Performance. *American Psychologist, 52*(6), 613-629.

Steele, C. (2003). Stereotype Threat and African-American Student Achievement. In T.

Perry, C. Steele & A. G. Hilliard (Eds.), *Young, Gifted and Black: Promoting High Achievement among African-American Students* Boston, MA: Beacon.

Suh, C.-H. (2009). Future Tasks of Myung Park Lee's Government Education Reform Implementation. *The Jounal of Educational Administration, 27*(2), 481-499.

Tienken, C. H., & Zhao, Y. (2013). How Common Standards and Standardized Testing Widen the Opportunity Gap. In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the Opportunity Gap: What America must do to Give Every Child an Even Chance* (pp. 111-122). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Tyack, D. B. (1974). *The One Best System: a History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Tyler, R. W. (1949). *Basic Principles of Curriculum and Instruction*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tyson, K. (2003). Notes from the Back of the Room: Problems and Paradoxes in the Schooling of Young Black Students. *Sociology of Education, 76*(4), 326-343.

Um, S.-W. (2013, April 11). The Repeal of the Policy that Reinforced Stratification among High Schools. *The Hangyeore*.

VanGalen, J. A. (2007). Introduction. In J. A. VanGalen & G. W. Noblit (Eds.), *Late to Class: Social Class and Schooling in the New Economy* (pp. 1-15). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Vogler, K. E. (2002). The Impact of High-Stakes, State-Mandated Student Performance Assessment on Teachers' Instructional Practices. *Education, 123*(1), 39-55.

Weis, L. (2004). *Class Reunion: The Remaking of the American White Working Class*. New York: Routledge.

Welner, K. G., & Carter, P. L. (2013). Achievement Gaps Arise from Opporutnity Gaps. In P. L. Carter & K. G. Welner (Eds.), *Closing the Opporutnity Gap: What America Must Do to Give Every Child an Even Chance* (pp. 1-10). New York, NY: Oxford University press.

Wiggan, G. (2007). Race, School Achievement, and Educational Inequality: Toward a Student-Based Inquiry Perspective. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(3), 310-333.

Willis, P. (1977). *Learning to labor: How working class kids get working class jobs*. New York: Columbia university press.

Yang, S.-K., Jeon, S.-H., & Lee, I.-K. (2008). The review and future of school policy in new government by analysis of High School Diversification 300 Project. *The journal of Educational Administration, 26*(2), 181-206.

Yin, R. (2009). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (4 ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage publications.

Youn, H.-H., & Kang, M.-J. (2008). An Analysis of Residence Effect on High-Ranked College Entrance in Seoul. *Seoul Studies, 9*(4), 87-106.

Young, M. D. (1971). *The Rise of Meritocracy*. Baltimore, MD: Penguin books.